THE ROMANTICISM OF ST. FRANCIS

FATHER CUTHBERT, O.S.F.C.

1916

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THE ROMANTICISM OF ST. FRANCIS

AND OTHER STUDIES IN THE GENIUS OF THE FRANCISCANS

BY

FATHER CUTHBERT, O.S.F.C.

NEW EDITION

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PREFACE

To those who look upon the history of the past as something more than a subject for pleasurable curiosity, who regard it rather as a mirror of the workings of the human spirit, from which one might gain some measure of the wisdom of experience, the main interest will always lie not in the mere spectacle or stage-setting of historic personages and events but rather in the more universal principles or truths of life itself to which the phenomena of history bear witness. We really know men only in so far as we know the ideals and motives by which they act; and a man's ultimate value to the world is not so much in himself as in the ideas and ideals by which he lives. This is true whether we take men individually or as they act together in some body corporate. Moreover, the phenomena of history are of little moment to practical knowledge save as they are connected in our thought with the main current of the world's life in which the human spirit at all times finds its affinity with the past.

In this book an attempt is made to gauge the real value of the life and genius of the Franciscans in relation to the human spirit itself. It is indeed but an inchoate attempt which others perhaps will improve upon if they deem the subject of sufficiently vital interest. The revival of the study of St. Francis and the Franciscans seems to point to a more than academic interest in Franciscan history.

1903

To many people St. Francis is a mediaeval prophet with a spiritual message for our own day. The question arises: What is the message which he brought to the world when he set up his standard of poverty in the Umbrian plain? Until we know that we cannot tell whether or how far his message is of immediate value at this present time.

One danger there is in an enthusiasm such as many have to-day for the great *Poverello:* it is the danger latent in all hero-worship, namely, of a too external view of a man's life and conduct. There is indeed in the story of St. Francis an intelligible fascination for an age in revolt against the tyranny of materialism. But such fascination does not always bear the test and scrutiny of experience. To picture to oneself the idyllic simplicity of "the Umbrian Galilee" may bring a period of mental relief when one is daily confronted with the philistinism of a utilitarian age. But if the mental relief is to pass into really appreciative thought and to add to the practical wisdom of life, the question must be faced: Was that idyllic simplicity a mere dreamer's dream or was it a practical response to some felt vital need of the human spirit? Was it, again, a mere transitory phenomenon or had it an underlying universal truth which men at any time might be the better for recognizing?

The Catholic Church at the beginning of the Franciscan movement instinctively confessed that the movement was of more than temporary usefulness and with her genius for assimilation, incorporated its ideals and practical conduct into the repertory of her standard "Rules" for religious perfection. Some will say that the Church in accepting the Franciscan movement fettered its idealism and made it captive to her legal organization. This is not the place for an apologetic concerning the Church's methods.

May we not say, however, that in her moderating influence upon the development of the Franciscan fraternity, the Church showed a deeper wisdom than those who would narrowly identify the genius of the Franciscan spirit with its primitive local and transitory expression? However that may be, the Franciscan ideal has remained a more or less living force in the Catholic world from the days of St. Francis until the present time. That it has done so, is surely a testimony that the Franciscans grasped some vital principle of human life itself and realized it under the ægis of the Catholic Church.

The present volume consists of five distinct "studies," in each of which an attempt has been made to present the inner thought of some aspect of the Franciscan life. One of these studies, "The Story of the Friars," is substantially a reprint of an essay, "On the Spirit and Genius of the Franciscan Friars," published in 1903 but long since out of print. For the purpose of this book, the essay had to be largely rewritten. The paper on St. Clare was written on the occasion of the septcentennial commemoration of the "conversion" of St. Clare, in 1912, and appeared in the course of that year in *The Catholic World* of New York. I have to tender my thanks to the editor of that magazine for his kind permission to republish the paper. In the study which gives the title to the book, I have incorporated a section of a lecture on "St Francis and Poverty," delivered in 1909 at the Franciscan College, Cowley, on the occasion of the septcentenary of the founding of the Franciscan Order. The fourth paper, "A Modern Friar," was begun with a view to separate publication, but at its conclusion it seemed to me more advisable to publish it in this volume, since it is but another illustration of the Franciscan mind; with the additional advantage that it

shows us a mind, genuinely and wholly Franciscan, actively alive to the problems of the present-day world.

I am fully conscious of the incompleteness of these studies ; and doubtless the student of Franciscan history will be able to point out many a shortcoming in my treatment of the subjects I have dealt with. But I send out this book for what it is worth, in the hope that it may throw some light not only upon Franciscan history but also upon some of the moral and spiritual problems by which our own time is perplexed.

FR. CUTHBERT, O.S.F.C.

GROSSETESTE HOUSE,
OXFORD.

AUTHOR'S NOTE TO THE SECOND EDITION

In preparing the second edition of *The Romanticism of St. Francis*, the author has included an essay appreciative of the character and work of Adam Marsh, one of the outstanding figures in the history of the early English Franciscans. The author, perhaps, may be permitted to say a word concerning this essay. Some few years ago he began to prepare material for a memoir of Adam Marsh, but he had not proceeded far in his research when it became evident that the story of Adam Marsh could be properly set forth only as it forms part of the larger story of the great reform movement in which the friar played no unimportant part. However, before the author could complete his researches for this larger story, he was called upon to undertake duties which made further research impossible. Whether he will be able at some future time to take up the threads of the story and complete it, is uncertain. That is his excuse for presenting the reader with the present fragmentary study of one whom he regards as amongst the noblest of the Franciscan figures in the thirteenth century.

Various emendations and additions have been made in the original essays, particularly in "The Story of the Friars."

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THE ROMANTICISM OF ST. FRANCIS

I

No better definition of the poverty loved by St. Francis has yet been given than that sung by Fra Jacopone da Todi :—

> Povertate e nulla havere
> Et nulla cosa poi volere
> Et omne cosa possidere
> En spirito de libertate.

"Poverty is in having nothing and in desiring nothing, yet in possessing all things in the spirit of liberty." It sounds paradoxical; but behind the screen of paradox hides the great truth of the Franciscan life, smilingly awaiting the seeker who would know why Francis loved his Lady Poverty. One can imagine Fra Jacopone, the worshipful page, meeting the inquirer at the threshold and in response to the question: "What is this Poverty?" replying: "Povertate e nulla havere et nulla cosa poi volere". With grim humour he notes the effect of this simple negation; then with a rush of sympathy for the inquirer and of triumph for the Lady Poverty, he invites him in with: "Et omne cosa possidere en spirito de libertate". In some such way it was that Francis admitted his disciples to the following of Poverty. He too was conscious of the paradox and delighted in it, though not so turbulently as Jacopone: but that perhaps was

because the saint was more wholly possessed by Poverty, whereas Jacopone, as we have said, was her faithful page, standing between her and an incredulous world.

The reader must pardon me if I have thus at once fallen into the speech of fancy and allegory. It is hardly possible otherwise to get at that Franciscan spirit which captivated the imagination of the thirteenth century, and thrilled its religious life with a sense of Christ-like liberty. The Franciscan story is itself a romance ; it is woven through and through with the spirit of romance ; it expressed itself in the language of romance. For all time the Franciscans have consecrated the romantic temperament and vision. They were not led on by philosophy or statesmanship, or by what is called practical common-sense. Theirs was the enthusiasm and vision which belongs to the spring-time of life, when a man's spirit soars upon the wings of adventure, and he reasons by intuition and speaks in figure. Their unique achievement was that they laid hold of this spring-time spirit and by God's grace dedicated it as a permanent possession in the tradition of Catholic life, for the comfort and joy of ages to come.

Of this spring-time spirit as it thus entered into the service of Jesus Christ and was accepted by the Catholic people, Franciscan poverty is the token. Poverty, to St. Francis and his followers, had no attraction or significance apart from that splendid possession of the spring-time life. They did not become poor from a morbid clinging to discomfort ; not even in order to inflict discomfort on others. They embraced poverty because it held for them a comfort and joy in this life, and the promise of yet a greater in the next. Poverty to them was at once a promise and possession of life, not its negation. Even now, and upon the earth it brought them joy. For like the Gospel, though

less universally, the poverty of the Franciscans, whilst it transcended in its aspiration and achievement the natural experience of the world, was yet closely allied to it. One cannot understand the Gospel save by reference to the universal needs of humanity ; and the true explanation of Franciscanism will be found only as we keep in view the romantic spirit which is of the nature of man. That romanticism which reveals itself so palpably in the story of the first Franciscan days, and in such purely Franciscan literature as the *Sacrum Commercium* and the *Fioretti* is no mere accident due to individual temperament or character : it is of the essence of the Franciscan spirit. One finds it, in a higher or lower intensity, in all pages of Franciscan history, sometimes untroubled in its freedom, at other times maintaining itself painfully against the intrusion of an alien spirit ; but always to the fore wherever the instinct of the world recognizes the genuine Franciscan tradition. It is that which gives to the story of Francis and his fraternity its penetrating idealism, its lyrical and dramatic situations, its comedy and tragedy, its spirit of adventure, and its unconventionalism, its wide human sympathies, and the mystical note in its religious devotion.

When, then, we speak of poverty as being the distinguishing mark of the life Franciscan, we must beware lest we take too narrowly the "nulla havere e nulla volere"—the having and desiring nothing—of Jacopone's definition. Francis, in truth, had much and desired much that makes life worth living, even from a merely secular standpoint, though much more from the standpoint of his religious faith. No one surely can doubt this who has read that delightful story in the *Fioretti* which tells "how St. Francis and Brother Masseo placed some bread which they had begged on a stone beside a fountain, and how St. Francis

greatly praised Poverty ". This story strikes so clearly the right Franciscan note concerning poverty, that it may be well to quote it at length. The story begins by relating how St. Francis, having sent the brethren two and two to various cities and places "after the example of Christ," himself with Brother Masseo set out on the road to France. It continues :—[1]

"Coming one day to a certain town and being very hungry, they [St. Francis and Brother Masseo] went, according to the Rule, to beg bread for the love of God, St. Francis going down one street and Brother Masseo down another. But because St. Francis was a man of mean appearance and small of stature, and accounted a vile beggar by those who knew him not, he received nothing but a few mouthfuls and crumbs of dry bread ; whilst Brother Masseo, being tall and comely in person, had good pieces and large, and many, given to him, and entire loaves. When they had begged enough they went together to a place outside the town, where there was a fair fountain, that they might eat, and beside which also was a broad and convenient stone, on which each placed all the alms which he had begged. And St. Francis, seeing that the pieces of bread which Brother Masseo had were larger and better than his own, had great joy, and spoke thus : 'O Brother Masseo, we are not worthy of so great treasure'. And as he repeated these words several times, Brother Masseo answered him : 'Father, how can this be called treasure, when we are in such poverty, and lack the things of which we have need—we, who have neither cloth, nor knives, nor plates, nor porringer, nor house, nor table, nor manservant, nor maidservant ?' Then said St. Francis :

[1] I quote from the Catholic Truth Society's translation : *The Little Flowers of St. Francis*, chap. XII.

'And this is what I call great treasure that there is nothing here provided by human industry, but everything is provided by Divine Providence, as we may manifestly see in this bread we have begged, in this stone which serves so beautifully for our table, and in this so clear fountain. And therefore I desire that we should pray to God that He would cause holy Poverty, which is a thing so noble that God Himself was made subject to it, to be loved by us with our whole heart.' "

Having prayed, and eaten their frugal meal, Francis and Masseo resume their journey. On the way Francis invites his companion to go with him to St. Peter and St. Paul at Rome.

" 'My brother,' he says, 'let us go to St. Peter and St. Paul, and pray them to teach us, and to give us to possess the inestimable treasure of holy poverty, inasmuch as it is a treasure so exalted and so Divine that we are not worthy to possess it in our vile bodies, seeing that this is that celestial virtue by which all earthly and transitory things are trodden under foot, and all impediments are lifted away from the soul, so that she can freely unite herself to the Eternal God. And this is the virtue which makes the soul, while still retained on earth, converse with the angels in heaven ; and this it is which accompanied Christ to His Cross, with Christ was buried, with Christ was raised up, with Christ ascended into heaven, which being given in this life to the souls which are enamoured of it, facilitates their flight to heaven, seeing that it guards the arms of true humility and charity, and therefore let us pray the most holy Apostles of Christ, who were perfect lovers of this Pearl of the Gospel of Christ, that they will beg for us this grace to be true lovers, observers, and humble disciples of this most precious, most lovable, evangelical poverty.' "

It is evident that to the Franciscan spirit as expressed in this story, poverty was a veritable sacrament bringing its receivers into communion with spiritual realities which are a vital joy to those who perceive them; and the important point is that the *Fioretti* is at one with almost all Franciscan literature in thus applauding the poverty of St. Francis as a sacrament of joyous life. The question then is: What were those realities which invested Franciscan poverty with such vital joy? That is the question we shall endeavour to answer in the course of these pages. This much is at once clear: poverty did not merely hold out an exile's hope to its Franciscan worshippers. The lyrical joyousness of the *Fioretti* is sufficient to assure us that Francis and those who were one with him in spirit, had already a felt possession of life, together with an assurance of a greater life to come. Nature itself, as witness the delight in "the fair fountain" and "broad convenient stone," is to them a joy. They rejoice, too, in the freedom of soul from "earthly and transitory things" which poverty gives them. Poverty leads them to converse with Christ on earth and facilitates their soul's flight towards heaven. The joy is present and palpable: they find themselves in a life beautiful. Giotto and Sassetta understood this when they painted their allegories of Francis and Poverty; so, too, did Dante when he sang of "the love, the marvels, and tender gazing" between the two lovers, which drew to Poverty a worshipping company.[1] In fact, the significance of Franciscan poverty has ever been set forth most convincingly by poet and artist, just because of its inherent romance. To understand it at all adequately, one must approach it through the idealism which belongs to the romantic temperament. For that reason the Franciscan idea has

[1] *Paradiso*, Canto XI. 77.

not infrequently been regarded as unpractical, of too ethereal a texture to have any direct relationship with the workaday world. The continued existence through seven centuries of the Franciscan fraternity and still more the far-reaching influence of Franciscan teaching on Catholic life, should make one pause before committing oneself to too absolute an assertion of this nature. Impracticable the Franciscan idea will be, if you set it to solve problems outside its own sphere ; and unpractical it would be if the romantic temperament had no place in the economy of life. To the Manchester economist, for instance, Franciscan poverty is naturally unthinkable except as a stupid challenge to the first principles upon which its utilitarian philosophy is based. So, too, from a religious point of view, to the Calvinist the Franciscan spirit will be not merely the mother of heresy but sheer spiritual chaos. But wherever men accept the romantic spirit either as a guiding principle or as a vitalizing influence, they will find some affinity in themselves with the Franciscan mind. This, perhaps, explains the renewed enthusiasm for St. Francis at the present day. Utilitarianism and materialism have resulted in so pronounced a pessimism that men are once again turning their eyes towards that romance of the spirit which for long they flouted, but which has ever been the savour of the world's life. And in this spreading feeling for spiritual renewal, St. Francis has once again been hailed as a prophet. Yet it will be well to recognize that the idealism of St. Francis was not a luxury of mere æsthetic sentiment, but a faith in life itself, an apprehension of realities and responsibilities. Only as it is thus realized, can Franciscan idealism have any power to disperse the winter of our discontent.

II

How closely the idealism of St. Francis was allied with a practical conduct of life, will be seen if we consider Franciscan poverty in what we may call its economic aspect.

Three fundamental notions stand out quite clearly in the Franciscan conception of poverty, economically considered. In the first place, the friars were to have no kind of proprietorship over material goods, neither individually nor corporately ; next, they were to labour and serve others, and for this they might receive a wage like other poor men ; thirdly, in case of necessity they were to go begging for alms : and in the eyes of St. Francis, living by alms was the highest poverty.

In the matter of proprietorship there can be no question as to the saint's intention. The brethren might enjoy the use of such things as were needful for bodily life—food, raiment, lodging, and so forth—but they must have no proprietorship even in the things needful. This principle is expressed thus in the Rule of the Friars Minor : " The brothers shall appropriate nothing to themselves, neither house, nor place, nor anything at all ".[1] And this law applied to the friars corporately as well as individually. The fraternity as such were to have no possessions, even as its individual members had none. The idea of corporate poverty was new amongst religious orders in the Church, and even amongst the penitential congregations of the

[1] Rule of 1223, cap. 6.

Middle Ages, with which the Franciscan Order had a close affinity. The members of these orders and congregations might renounce property as individuals ; they always kept the right to own property in common. But St. Francis would have nothing to do with property in any sense. "The Brethren," he said, "must be pilgrims and strangers in the world."[1] The *Speculum Perfectionis* tells us : "He was minded the Brethren should in no wise, neither in houses, nor churches, nor gardens, nor in ought else whereof they had the use, trespass beyond the bounds of poverty, nor hold any places whatsoever by right of ownership, but should sojourn therein as pilgrims and strangers".[2] Celano says : "He [Francis] would not let the Brethren live in any dwelling, even a small one, unless it were sure that there was some owner to whom the property belonged ; for he always aimed at his sons observing the laws of pilgrims—namely, to be gathered under another's roof, to pass onward peaceably, and to thirst after their native land".[3] Later on, when the Order grew in numbers, this Rule was found to have its inconveniences, but Francis would not relax it, not even when urged to do so by Cardinal Ugolino.[4] And in like manner St. Clare for thirty years contended against those who in this matter deemed the Franciscan Rule impracticable.[5]

Indeed the whole scheme of the Franciscan Rule was formed upon this acceptance of corporate poverty in the

[1] Rule of 1223, cap. 6.

[2] *Speculum Perfectionis*, cap. 10.

[3] II Celano, 59.

[4] *Speculum Perfectionis*, cap. 68.—The cardinal, in face of a practical difficulty, eventually declared that dwellings used by the Friars Minor, when not otherwise owned, were the property of the Holy See, and not of the Franciscan fraternity.

[5] Cf. *The Life and Legend of the Lady St. Clare*, translated by Mrs. Balfour, Introduction, ii.

sense of non-proprietorship. The brethren were not to be tied to any place by bond of ownership ; they were to be free from the responsibilities and temptations of property in order that they might follow out their own special vocation. What that vocation was we shall see farther on : it is hinted at in the passages quoted above, where it is said that St. Francis wished his brethren to be as " pilgrims and strangers " wherever they came.

But even pilgrims upon the road must live ; and lacking possessions of their own, they have but two honest means of subsistence before them : the alms which others might give them, or their own labour. Francis declared for both labour and alms. And here we come upon a certain difficulty to our modern way of thinking. The saint had a strong affection for the beggar and his dependence upon alms ; and there can be no doubt that he regarded the beggar's dependence upon alms as something sacred in the eyes of God. Let us hear his own words :—

" Dearest brothers," he exclaimed on one occasion, " the Son of God, Who for our sakes made Himself poor in this world, was nobler than we. For His sake we have chosen the way of poverty, and ought not to be ashamed to go for alms."[1] And there is a touching story told of a Brother, perhaps one of those who at first were bashful in begging, returning from Assisi with alms, and as he came near the Porziuncola he broke forth into song, singing with a loud voice. St. Francis, hearing him, suddenly jumped up, and ran out and kissed the brother's shoulder ; and, taking the wallet on his own shoulders, he exclaimed : " Blessed be my brother who goes readily [for alms], seeks humbly, and returns rejoicing ".[2] In his Rule, after ordaining that the brethren shall have no proprietorship, the Saint con-

[1] II Celano, 74. [2] *Ibid.*, 75.

tinues: "And as pilgrims and strangers in this world serving the Lord in poverty and humility, let them go confidently in quest of alms . . . this, my dearest brothers, is the height of the most sublime poverty: poor in goods but exalted in virtue".[1]

Again there is in his reply to Cardinal Ugolino, who remonstrated with him for going out to beg his bread when he was a guest in the Cardinal's house: "My lord," replied Francis, "I have shown you honour since I have honoured a greater Lord; for God is well pleased with poverty and especially with that poverty which is voluntary begging".[2]

When, then, we are told that labour and not mendicancy is the basis of the economical life of the Friars Minor, the inference is apt to run counter to the explicit words and conduct of St. Francis and his first following. The whole story of the first Franciscan days proves that mendicancy was not regarded merely as an occasional expedient in times of distress "when the wages of our work are not given us": mendicancy was to Francis the nobler poverty.

And yet at the same time it is true that he insisted on the moral obligation to labour and serve others. The brethren must work even whilst they are encouraged "to go for alms". In his first Rule he has this passage: "Let the brothers who know how to work, labour and exercise themselves in that art which they may understand, if it be not contrary to the salvation of their souls, and they can exercise it becomingly. For the prophet says: 'For thou shalt eat the labours of thy hands, blessed art thou, and it shall be well with thee'. And the apostle says: 'If any man will not work, neither let him eat'."[3] Again: "Let

[1] Regula II, cap. 6. [2] II Celano, 73.

[3] Regula I, cap. 7. Cf. Barthol. Pisan., *De Conformitate* in *Anal. Franc.*, IV. pp. 407–10; also II Celano, 161, *Speculum Perfectionis*, cap. 24.

every man abide in the art or employment wherein he is called . . . and they may have the tools and implements necessary for their work ".[1] The Rule also contemplates the brethren serving in the houses of others, for it says : " Let the brothers, in whatever places they may be among others to serve or to work, not be chamberlains, nor cellarers, nor overseers in the houses of those whom they serve ".[2] We know that these passages in the Rule were not mere dead-letters. The *Vita Fratris Ægidii* tells us how Brother Giles, whilst sojourning with the monks of the Santi Quattro in Rome, used to keep the monks supplied with water from the distant fountain of San Sisto ; it tells us, too, how on his journey he earned his bread by peddling water through the city, or hawking baskets, or threshing beans, or burying the dead ; and the legend adds : " When this failed him, he returned to the table of Jesus Christ, begging alms from door to door ".[3] The *Speculum Perfectionis* tells us how the Friars assisted the labourers in the field at harvest time, receiving a portion of the harvest as their wage.[4] Thomas of Celano, describing the daily life of the first friars, says : " By day those who knew how to, worked with their hands ; and they stayed in lepers' houses or in other decent places, serving all with humility and charity ".[5] There is, too, the witness of St. Francis in his Testament. Finally, in the second Rule it is laid down the friars " may receive as the reward of their labour, the things needful for the body, both for themselves and their brethren, excepting coin or money ".[6]

At first sight it might seem as though there were here a contradiction to the exaltation of mendicancy as the more worthy poverty. But the contradiction lies partly in our

[1] Regula I, cap. 7. [2] *Ibid.*
[3] *Chron.* XXIV., *Gen.* in *Anal. Franc.*, III. p. 81.
[4] Cap. 55. [5] I Celano, 39. [6] Regula II, cap. 5.

own habit of thought which instinctively regards "the honest workman" as morally superior to the beggar; partly to the failure to grasp the idea itself as it existed in Francis's mind. Francis did not, as is the common fashion, regard labour and alms as an antinomy in the life of the poor. The beggar and the labourer symbolized to him two aspects of a sacred truth which he in special manner connected with the idea of Christian poverty: that truth was the truth of Divine Providence.

It will be remembered how Francis, in the moment of being disinherited by his father, exclaimed: "Now, I may more freely say: 'Our Father Who art in heaven'".[1] Giotto, depicting this scene on the wall of the church of San Francesco at Assisi, has represented the Saint at this moment looking up to heaven and gazing upon the Hand of God's Providence held out to him through the clouds. The picture is an accurate setting forth of the faith in which the Franciscan life was founded. Out of this faith in Divine Providence arose the special form of the Franciscan's relationship both with God and creatures. God to him was before all else, the Great Father, the Infinite Love Who encompasses creation with watchful solicitude; and men and all living things were the family of God, who fulfil their life in trustful dependence upon His loving care. With the realization of this faith as the supreme form of all his religious life, Francis came to regard the beggar's dependence upon the goodwill of men, as the symbol of every man's proper dependence upon God: and straightway the beggar became sacred to him.

But Francis had the gift of seeing truths comprehensively, as poets and mystics have. If Divine Providence spelt dependence on the creatures' part, it spelt bounty on God's

[1] II Celano, 12.

part : and creatures are formed in the image of God : in the faith of Francis, therefore, all creatures in their degree are called to dispense the bountifulness of God, as well as to be its recipients. This aspect of his faith reveals itself splendidly in his attitude towards Nature, in whose working he saw God's providence in action : as when he sang in his *Canticle of Brother Sun* :—

> Praise be to Thee, my Lord, with all Thy creatures,
> Chiefest of all, Sir Brother Sun
> Who is our day ; through whom Thou givest light. . . .
> Praise be to Thee, my Lord, for Brother Wind, and for the air, and for the cloud, for clear sky and all weathers,
> By which Thou givest nourishment to all Thy creatures. . . .
> Praise be to Thee, my Lord, for Brother Fire ; by whom Thou lightest up the night. . . .
> Praise be to Thee, my Lord, for our Sister, Mother Earth,
> The which sustains and keeps us :
> She brings forth diverse fruits, the many-hued flowers and grass.
> O Creatures all ! praise and bless my Lord and grateful be,
> And serve Him with deep humility.[1]

The same sentiment is found in the *Fioretti* story quoted above. The " fair fountain " and the " broad convenient stone " are to him evidences of God's solicitude : they fulfil in their purpose the bounty of God inasmuch as they provide drink and a table for the poor man's meal.

But whereas Nature discharges this trust unconsciously, man is the conscious and responsible channel of the Divine bounty. No man possesses anything, whether gifts of Nature or acquired gifts or gifts of grace, merely for his own pleasure : they are a trust which properly he controls for the good of the family of God. From this point of view the labour by which we contribute to the well-being of the world, as well as the dispensing of acquired wealth, is a

[1] *Vide* my *Life of St. Francis of Assisi*, 1st ed., p. 354 ; 3rd ed., p. 421.

fulfilment of the Divine solicitude for man, and a practical exhibition of one's belief in Providence: whilst idleness is in some measure a frustration of God's designed bounty. The poor man in his poverty may not be able to dispense wealth, but he can still dispense the better thing, his personal service: and it was in this light that Francis regarded labour. A man's labour, whether of body or spirit, was to him the most direct exhibition in creaturely fashion of God's unceasing labour for the welfare of His creatures: and as such, labour was sacred to Francis. Labour had indeed many values in the saint's eyes. He regarded it, for example, as the guardian of that humility which belongs to the truly Christian soul; especially menial work which brings a man into spiritual fellowship with the poor. Also, he held it as a safeguard against the temptations of body and soul, which idleness induces. But above all, labour was to him an act of love towards God and man.

Hence, whilst on the one hand the Franciscan fraternity was to give the world an example of entire faith in God's watchful solicitude, by its renunciation of property and its dependence on alms; on the other hand, the friars were to show forth in their labour the co-ordinate obligation of men to work and to serve one another. And in order that their labour should be more securely established in its primary motive of fulfilling the law of Divine Love, their work was not to be dependent upon any wage. "I worked with my hands and so I desire to work," Francis wrote in his Testament, "and I firmly desire that all the other brethren work in some honest employment. Let those who know not how to work, learn; not from desire to receive the price of their labour, but for example's sake and to repel idleness." If the wages of their work were not given them, he added, "they

shall go asking alms with confidence". The notion of a definite price for so much labour was in fact distasteful to the soul of Francis, inasmuch as it seemed to him to denote a personal interest at variance with that free service of Christian charity in which he saw the figure of the Divine bounty. Brought up as he had been in the atmosphere of a merchant's calling, he had come to connect the commercial spirit with selfishness and avarice : and all bargaining for gain was to him odious.[1] He would have men give freely ; and this he made the law of his fraternity.[2] And as they were to give freely, so they were to receive freely and without shame whatever was needful : though to maintain themselves in poverty and to avoid the abuse of generosity, they were not to accept anything beyond what was strictly needed for their sustenance.

Such then was poverty as conceived by St. Francis. It meant the renunciation of all dominion over material goods, even that dominion which is implicit in the notion of a legal wage. That was its negative aspect. Positively it signified dependence upon God's bounty as manifested in the generosity of Nature and of man's goodwill. Concomitantly, however, with this dependence went the obligation to fulfil in oneself the active bounty of God, through labour and service.

It is evident that this Franciscan poverty in its simplest form, as embraced by Francis and his fraternity, would be unworkable in the ordinary life of the world. Nor did Francis himself ever consider it as applicable to society at large. Even to his lay followers, or tertiaries as they are now called, he handed it on only in a modified form. With them it was to be as a spiritual leaven in daily life rather

[1] See the story of Brother Sylvester in II Celano, 109.
[2] Cf. *Leg.* 3 *Soc.*, xi. 43–44.

than as a hard-and-fast external rule. At the same time idealism is always to be tested by its capacity to influence the matter-of-fact life of the multitude : unless it can do this, it is lacking in reality. But Franciscan poverty has proved itself in history as an effective protest against the world's avarice and absorption in material gains ; and it undoubtedly lays claim to serious consideration by Christian economists, in so far as it asserts that the true basis of economic relations in Christian society is that human fellowship which is implied in the Catholic conception of the Fatherhood of God.

But it must be remembered that Francis was not directly concerned with the spiritual problem of wealth, but with the spiritual value of poverty as a condition for the realization of the soul's freedom. Others before Francis had shown how wealth and property can be an instrument for the upholding of Christian character and Christian society. It was Francis who most clearly convinced men that poverty, too, may be a factor in moral and spiritual development. But just as wealth to effect its purpose in the ideal of the kingdom of Christ must be governed by Christian laws and motives, so, too, poverty attains to Christian freedom only when it is taken up by the Catholic Faith and invested with the rights and responsibilities which flow from the Catholic conception of society. The poor man's fundamental right under this law is to be sustained in his necessities by the goodwill of his fellow-Christians : his fundamental responsibility is to maintain this right in honour by fulfilling the common law of mutual service through his labour.

Upon this conception of poverty Francis built up the spiritual life of his fraternity. What that life was in its full and intimate sense we will now consider.

III

To anyone acquainted with the history of the Middle Ages it will be evident that the story of St. Francis in its temperament and idealism is peculiarly akin to mediaeval chivalry. In his religious conversion Francis became "the knight-errant of Christ," "the herald of the heavenly King," "the minstrel of the Lord".[1] His life, as we read it, is a chivalrous adventure and a song. In his youth his day-dream was to emulate the heroes of romantic chivalry; like them he would go forth and win knighthood and glory, become a captain in war, and win fame by his personal prowess and courtliness. One must need feel the spirit of youth to sympathize with the vagaries of his early days before he found his vocation, and to understand the intense seriousness which lay behind them. With him they were not the mere whims of a moment, but the immature expressions of a spirit seeking to know itself, as his later story proves. And the spirit which was in him was really the spirit of that new chivalry which was refashioning the manhood of the Middle Ages and giving at once an inspiration and a law to the newly awakened sense of personal life which dominates the history of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Chivalry was undoubtedly the most virile product of the romantic movement of that period; and it still lives in the Christian world's conception of a gentleman as the embodiment of

[1] Cf. *Speculum Perfectionis*, cap. 72; *ibid.*, cap. 100; I Celano, 16; *Leg.* 3 *Soc.*, 16.

courtesy and courage. To chivalry we owe the revival of the sense of personal dignity as dependent upon a man's self and inherent qualities, and of personal responsibility as attaching to strength and liberty. True, in the chivalric romances we oftentimes find the romantic temperament running wild : they are frequently fantastic and not always morally consistent. Yet at their best they gave utterance to a great truth which had long been obscured, and perhaps never before so adequately realized in the world's life : and for that reason they still hold the attention of men.

It was just this spirit of chivalry in its purest form which St. Francis stamped with the seal of his Catholic Faith, and embedded into the conscious life of the Church. It governed his religious life even as it had attracted his youthful ambition. To his vision the Gospel presented itself primarily as a divine romance in which was set forth that law and liberty of the personal spirit which secular chivalry aspired to but even at its best only imperfectly achieved. In this evangelical romance Jesus Christ was the Restorer of the world's joy. Chivalry had taught Francis that the world was made for joy, and that joy was to be found in adventure and love. But whereas in secular romance joy was always elusive, in the Gospel it became a permanent possession to those who followed Jesus Christ in His sublime adventure for the world's redemption, and in His vast love for God and man. The Christ-life, therefore, was the ideal form and law by which men attain to that joyous realization of self which is the ambition of the romantic spirit. Hence it is that in the Franciscan legend our Lord in His earthly mission is regarded as the supreme type of Christian knightliness and as the Liege-Lord in Whose following the brethren attain to all the virtues of that high Christian manhood which He Himself exemplifies. It was not so much as the Supreme

Hierarch of the Christian State or as the High Abbot or Ruler of the Christian community that the Franciscan worshipped Him—though in his Catholic spirit the Franciscan assumed our Lord to be in every way the Fount and Law-giver of Christian society : but to the Franciscan the Christ-life of the Gospel appealed peculiarly as the pattern and law by which Christian manhood itself is to be realized.

Seven centuries before the appearance of the Franciscans, St. Benedict, the founder of western monasticism, initiated a religious movement whose chief glory in history is that it educated the new Christian peoples of the West to the conviction of the sacredness of social law. In the Benedictine ideal of the perfect life, the community, as a social entity rather than political, was the dominating factor : the individual was to realize himself in and through the community. Historically the conception and development of Benedictine monasticism is explainable by the universally felt need of the Christian world in the early Middle Ages for a subordination of the individual self to an organized common life : psychologically the Benedictine stood for the elemental fact in human life that man is a social being. St. Benedict, answering to this psychological and historical demand of the human spirit, drew from the Catholic Faith an ideal of the Christian community or social family, which became in its more universal aspect, as distinct from its special application to the cloistral life of the monks, the norm of the organized Catholic community.

But if the formation of the social life is the first necessity in civilization, the liberty of the individual to develop his personal life is equally necessary to its fuller completion ; and in the twelfth century the felt need of this liberty swept over Christendom as a kindling flame. The Church had shown itself capable of directing the social instinct and of

inspiring it with an adequate religious motive. Was it capable of dealing similarly with the movement for a freer personal life ? That was the crucial problem which confronted the Church at the end of the twelfth century : a problem even more vital than the defence of her authority against the heretics since it would test her own inherent universality as the religion of the human spirit. The solution was found in the development during the twelfth century of the new mediaeval form of piety, but more particularly in the Franciscan movement. Here was a religious uprising, wholly Catholic, drawing its inspiration and ultimate sanction from the Catholic Faith ; yet at the same time a true and simple expression of the new romantic spirit which was challenging the supremacy of the old social order. In the Franciscan fraternity romanticism in its purest and most spiritual form became allied with the Catholic Faith and discovered itself at one with the Catholic spirit. At the same time it found its proper co-ordination with other forms of the human spirit in the universality of Catholic life. It gained its own freedom not by way of denying the validity of the common life, but rather by asserting itself as a new spirit complementary to the old, and as contained in the wider conception of Catholic life out of which the " conventional " idea had itself sprung. Hence St. Francis did not institute his fraternity in opposition to the established monastic communities ; nor did he in delivering to the world his message of poverty call in question the validity of the established social order in so far as it was consistent with the fundamental principles of the Gospel as interpreted by the Catholic Faith. But what he did was to obtain for the romantic spirit, as distinct from the conventional, a due and final recognition within the life of Catholicism. Religious romanticism received its

benediction at the hands of the Church on the day that Pope Innocent III approved of the Franciscan *forma vivendi*, and bade Francis and his companions "go forth and preach penance to all".

And now we can see how it was that the Franciscan fraternity came by its rule of corporate poverty, and why St. Francis was not content to impose upon his followers the ordinary monastic rule of individual poverty. The rule of individual poverty, common to most religious orders, is based on a twofold principle. It is designed to enforce more completely the universal Christian law of spiritual detachment from dominion over the material world, so that a man may more freely give himself to the desire of the things of the spirit. But also it was meant to draw the individual into the common life of the community through his dependence upon the common fund for his means of bodily subsistence. As an individual he could own nothing: but as a member of the community he was a trustee for the common property. The common fund and corporate ownership were as necessary in the conception of the monastic community as was individual poverty. They are the material basis of that stability and solidarity which belongs to the idea of the family or civic community: and as the monastic or cenobitic life was formed upon this idea, the rule of corporate property entered quite naturally into its institution.

But, as we have seen, the fundamental conception in the organization of the Franciscan fraternity was not the static or family life, but the personal life of the individual. The Franciscan fraternity might be likened to the Free Company which played so prominent a part in the European wars of the fifteenth century, in this that the common bond was such as depended upon the personal character of the men, rather than upon some external, social, or political sanction.

The external sanction did indeed enter into Franciscan life, inasmuch as it was a life within the larger life of the body corporate of the Catholic Church. Also, as the fraternity increased and developed, it was found necessary to take to itself something of the character and organization of the static community. But fundamentally the Franciscan fraternity was wedded to the ideal of the perfect man rather than of the perfect State or community; and its purpose was to achieve this ideal through an immediately personal following of "the Poor Christ". The fraternity, therefore, as the nursing-mother of this ideal, must be poor corporately as well as in its individual members. As its special purpose was to gather together a following of "the Poor Christ," the holding of property whether corporate or individual, would have been an inconsistency. The fraternity must be free to pursue, untrammelled by the cares and responsibilities attaching to property, that immediately personal following of Christ in which it was founded. "If we have possessions," said Francis to the Bishop of Assisi, "we shall need arms to defend ourselves; and we shall be drawn into lawsuits and disputes with our neighbours: and so the charity of Christ will be hindered in us."[1]

Apart from the particular religious motive which gave character to Franciscan poverty, a certain carelessness about wealth and property seems to attach itself naturally to the romantic temperament. Thus, in the case of Francis himself, even in the days before his religious conversion, he was prodigal of money, giving freely without a thought of the morrow. Had he remained in the world, he would never have amassed money as his father did; unless he had turned his back upon his early dreams and changed his character. But in the awakening of soul which led to his

[1] Cf. *Leg. 3 Soc.*, 35.

conversion, that early carelessness in regard to wealth became a more positive principle as he became conscious that in poverty he would gain a greater freedom to realize his vision of the Christ-life as the one desirable personal possession.

What precisely that Christ-life was, we shall consider farther on. Here we are endeavouring to show how the Franciscan life originated in the yearning of the human spirit to realize its own personality, which was the great problem the Church had to face in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

How entirely St. Francis was concerned with the practical problem of personality in the Christian life will be more clearly seen if we take note of the moral qualities upon which the Franciscan legend most emphatically insists as exhibiting the true Franciscan character. These qualities, it will be recognized, do not belong exclusively to the Franciscans: they will be found amongst all men of marked personality, and they are especially notable in all periods of history, whether Christian or pagan, when men are of more account than institutions or systems in the movement of the world's life. For that reason we may regard these moral qualities as the natural laws by which the human personality spiritually achieves itself. But St. Francis and his followers made them in some way a peculiar possession of their spirit because of the jealous insistence with which they inculcated them and also because of the unusual consistency with which they adhered to them.

In the first place, then, the Franciscan legend is imbued with the conviction that the first law is trustful obedience to an ideal of faith which has for the individual the authority of conscience and the sanctity of religion. Without such a governing ideal a man is as a lost soul, lacking spiritual

stability and truth. The accepted ideal is at once the law and liberty of the personal life.

Nowhere is this conviction more palpable than in that pure gem of Franciscan thought, the *Fioretti*, where the faith of the brethren in their beckoning ideal of "the Poor Christ" is as the sunlight of their existence and the measure of their perfection. Brother Elias is reprobated because he fails to keep fast his faith in "the simplicity of the Gospel," that is the Franciscan life; Brothers Masseo and Ruffino are held up to judgment because for a while they let slip their hold upon the ideal simplicity St. Francis set before them; Brother Bernard da Quintavalle, amidst distracting temptations, is saved by reason of his undeviating obedience to the path he has chosen; whilst St. Francis himself is set high in glory because he ever walks in the vision of the Lord Christ. The inner ideal carries the brethren forward; the lack of it causes them to stumble or turn back. In the *Fioretti* the power of the accepted ideal to make the brethren glorious is the triumphant theme; and the failure to trust in its guidance is the cardinal sin. But in all the Franciscan legends allegiance to the ideal is the most intimate law of life: and that which gives unity and secures progress.

The Franciscan ideal itself was visioned in "the Poor Christ";[1] and our Lord in His life of poverty on earth was therefore the Sovereign Law and Exemplar of the friars, individually and corporately: this life was the accepted standard by which the friar must judge himself: in its following he must walk under all circumstances, nor was his obedience to it to be regulated by any merely external regulation, but only by the grace which was in him. Obedience to this guiding ideal was to be as absolute as human

[1] This expression is frequently found in Franciscan literature, notably in the letters of St. Clare, and the *Sayings of Brother Giles*.

weakness would permit : it was the measure of the friar's spiritual freedom.

But if obedience to the ideal was as the foundation of Franciscan discipline, the second law was truthfulness—that is, truthfulness with oneself as well as with others. To tell a lie is always a greater offence against oneself than against the man to whom it is told, since it is a betrayal of that manliness which makes the man. Thomas of Eccleston says of the first English Franciscans : "They were so jealous of the truth that they would hardly dare to speak in hyperbole ".[1] But it was not only in their words that the followers of St. Francis were scrupulous as to truth. In their conduct they were taught " not to appear outwardly before men other than they really were in themselves ".[2] This jealousy for personal truthfulness is perhaps one of the most charming features in the history of St. Francis and the early friars. It led them at times into quaint devices for correcting what they considered the world's exaggerated estimate of their virtue ; but it kept them fast in an almost inviolable sincerity with themselves. Francis was particularly careful to warn his brethren against that false estimate of oneself which a man is apt to draw from some reflected glory. " The glory of each man is in his own suffering, not in that of others," he reminded them when the news of the martyrdom of the friars sent to Morocco—the first martyrs of the Order—sent a thrill of enthusiasm throughout the fraternity.[3]

Directly allied to this truthfulness of the Franciscans and with their loyalty to their ideal was their simplicity. As one reads the Franciscan legend one comes to think of simplicity as almost the supremely cherished virtue in

[1] *De Adventu*, ed. Little, p. 32. [2] II Celano, 130.
[3] *Chron. Jordani a Jano*, in *Anal. Franc.*, I. p. 3.

the fraternity, challenging even poverty itself in the affection of the brethren. But in truth to the mind of Francis and his brotherhood, simplicity was as the soul of poverty; or as one might say, that diviner poverty which Nature shares with the Creator: the poverty of the leaf which is nothing but itself and of God in Whom there is nothing but what belongs to His own Being. So Francis would be nothing but the worshipful follower of his chosen Lord, and endeavoured without any deviation to keep to the way in which his visioned ideal led him. At the same time he was too truthful to confuse—as some idealists do—his actual personal attainment with the ideal achievement. He thus led his followers to avoid that pitfall of the romantic temperament—the tendency to act a part instead of living it.

Thomas of Celano has summed up in a very striking passage the characteristics of that "holy pure simplicity" which figures so prominently in Franciscan legend. He says: "The Saint was in some sort more especially careful to show forth in himself and to value in others, holy Simplicity, the daughter of Grace, the sister of Wisdom and the mother of Righteousness. Not every kind of simplicity, however, met with his approval, but that alone which, being content with her God alone, sets at naught all else. She it is who makes her boast in the fear of God and knows not how to do evil or how to speak it. She it is who examines herself but condemns no one in her judgment; who surrenders to her superior in authority what is his due, and covets no authority. She it is who, not deeming Greek glories to be the best,[1] chooses to act rather than to study and to teach. She it is who in regard to all the laws divine leaves to those who are to perish, wordy digressions, orna-

[1] Celano is here referring to those who were anxious for learning in opposition to the mind of St. Francis.

ments and embellishments, display and curious inquiry, and seeks not for the bark but for the pith, not for the shell but for the kernel, not for many things but for much, for the supreme and enduring Good."[1] In its main points this is the simplicity which attaches to every man whose mind is absorbed in the worship of the ideal and in its personal realization.

One passage in this description of Franciscan simplicity points to a third pervading rule in the Franciscan discipline of life. "Simplicity," says Thomas of Celano, "chooses to act rather than to study and to teach." By study he means academic study, the seeking of knowledge for knowledge's sake. Now in the Franciscan scheme action is put before knowledge; and knowledge is considered of value only in so far as it leads to action or right conduct. "As much knowledge (*scientia*) hath a man," St. Francis was wont to say, "as he doth work, and a religious is a good speaker (*orator*) only in so far as he himself works, for the doer is known by his fruit."[2] All through the Franciscan legend we find emphasis put upon action—not necessarily external action, but spiritual activity in its broadest sense—as a condition of real life. Thus brother Giles on being asked for a text by a friar with an ambition to preach, suggested this: "Bo, bo; molto dico e poco fo"—"Bo, bo; much I talk and little do". And another time he exclaimed: "Hear, brothers, the word that ought to be: Work, work, and talk not!"[3] St. Francis's opposition to scholastic learning is to be rightly appreciated from this point of view. Intellectualism seemed to him the danger on which the true realization of the personal life is apt to be side-tracked; and

[1] II Celano, 189.

[2] Cf. *The Golden Sayings of Brother Giles*, by Fr. Paschal Robinson, O.F.M., p. 91.

[3] *Speculum Perfectionis*, cap. 4.

in his own day the danger was very imminent. On the one hand, there was the intellectual movement on the schools ; on the other, the literary interest aroused by the writers of romance. The temper of the schools was rationalizing and pedantic ; the romance literature tended to sentimentalism. To the strong, eager spirit of Francis both tendencies were anathema : the one, because it left the heart, the spring of moral action, untouched ; the other, because it made men content with a purely external interest in life. In the schools, said Francis, men did not learn " truly to know God " or " to gather together the scattered energies of the heart ".[1] Of the literary danger he said : " Charles the Emperor, Roland and Oliver, and all the paladins and puissant men that were mighty in war . . . did achieve a victory worthy of remembrance . . . yet now there be many who would fain receive honour and praise of men for only telling the tale of the deeds they did ".[2] Francis, then, would have his followers do deeds, and not merely talk about them ; " to gather together the scattered energies of the heart," and not be led by " mere curiosity of learning " ; a rule of wisdom surely which would have commended itself to Plato as well as to St. Paul.

Now these three principles—obedience to the ideal, truthfulness, especially with oneself, and the subordination of knowledge to spiritual action, are really the three fundamental moral laws for the development of personality ; and wherever romanticism has become a spiritual reality in the world, it is by fidelity to these moral laws. But nowhere have they been more clearly manifest than amongst those joyous subjects of the Lady Poverty who with Francis made the plains of Umbria echo the glad cry of a great world-spirit at peace with itself and with the Faith of Christendom.

[1] II Celano, 194. [2] *Speculum Perfectionis*, cap. 4.

IV

We have already noted that the ideal which governed the lives of St. Francis and his followers was, in Franciscan language, "the Poor Christ": that is to say, not simply the poverty of Jesus Christ but rather Jesus Christ in His earthly poverty. The distinction is of primary importance if we are not to miss the true significance of the Franciscans in Christian history. It marks the essential distinction between the poverty of St. Francis and that of the mediaeval sectaries, such as the Poor Men of Lyons and the Cathari. Most of the reform movements in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries set out with the professed purpose of bringing back the Church to the poverty of Christ: but in practice at least they worshipped the poverty more than the Christ; and by consequence their gospel was legal and political rather than human and spiritual. With them evangelical poverty was at best a mere moral code and at its worst a bitter political cry. But with St. Francis it was altogether different. He took poverty to himself as one takes a personal joy. He can hardly be said to have regarded it as a discipline, certainly not as a mere external programme. With perfect reason he spoke of it as "Lady Poverty," since to him it was as a free spirit resplendent with human and God-like qualities by virtue of its alliance with Jesus Christ the Mirror of all human and Divine perfection. Francis's supreme worship went out to that personal perfection of life which he saw incarnate in his Divine

Lord, and he worshipped poverty only because it was the keeper of his affection for that far-off desired perfection. "Love poverty that thou mayest be able to imitate the Poor Christ and give thyself more freely to God," was a saying of Brother Giles.[1] St. Clare writes, in a letter to Agnes of Prague: "O Blessed Poverty, which giveth unending joys to them who love thee and hold thee in sweet embrace": and what these joys are is the burden of the letter: they all centre in the vision of "Jesus Christ the Poor".[2] The same thought runs through all the early Franciscan literature.

To get, then, at the substance of Franciscan life, we must understand what this ideal of "the Poor Christ" definitely meant to the Franciscan mind.

Again we must go back to the day-dream of St. Francis's youth for the key to the problem, and to that chivalry from which he took so much of his inspiration: so true is it that the religious life of the saint was but a religious conversion and fulfilment of the secular ideals of his early days. At that period of his story his ambition was for personal glory. As a young man he threw himself into the gay company of the rich youths of the city and became the leader of the revels. He evidently regarded himself as destined to high place and honour amongst his fellows and made no secret of his belief.[3] It is also plain that the glory he aspired to was not of the conventional type esteemed by the prosperous burgher-class to which he belonged by birth. He figured himself as a hero of romance, winning his laurels on the field of battle and in adventure.[4] He

[1] Cf. *The Golden Sayings*, op. cit., p. 109.

[2] Cf. *Epist. I*, "Acta SS.," Martii, vol. I. p. 505 (*The Life and Legend of the Lady St. Clare*, by Mrs. Balfour, p. 139).

[3] *Leg.* 3 *Soc.*, 4–5; II Celano, 4. [4] *Ibid.*, 6.

scandalized the more respectable citizens by the prodigality with which he parted with money and by the bizarre splendour of his dress. He was sensitive to the beauty of nature, and shrank from ugliness and deformity.[1] In fact, as he shows himself in his early history, he is a very embodiment of that romantic spirit which uttered itself in the chivalric literature of the time. How far he was acquainted with this literature it is impossible to say: that he had some acquaintance with it is certain. But chivalry with him was an instinct more than an acquired habit; it was the mould into which his thought and desire naturally ran. So he dreamed of adventure and glory, and delighted in colour and splendour and song, and thirsted to be alive. Yet hardly had he become conscious of definite desire with the dawn of manhood than he was touched with that melancholy which comes with the first sense of unreality in one's figurement of the ideal. It was then that his thoughts were drawn to religion. The secular romance upon which he had hitherto fed his imagination seemed to him too thin a food to satisfy the craving of his spirit; of too uncertain a substance. Thus his thoughts were turned inward upon himself and he passed through a dark night of self-examination. He issued from it a confirmed romanticist but with his idealism yoked to the felt reality of experience and sublimated by religious faith: all his faith and desire was now centred upon "the Poor Christ," as the crown and glory of our humanity.

How this faith first came to him as a guiding conviction, St. Francis himself has told us. It came to him suddenly after a long groping in the dark, in his intercourse with the lepers. He states this in his Testament. "The Lord gave to me, Brother Francis, thus to begin to do

[1] II Celano, 9.

penance," he writes ; " for when I was in my sins it seemed to me too bitter a thing to see lepers ; but the Lord Himself led me amongst them and I dealt mercifully with them. And when I left them, what had seemed bitter to me was changed into sweetness of soul and body ; and afterwards I tarried yet awhile and then left the world." That St. Francis's conversion should come about in some such way might have been expected : for religion usually comes home to a man first by way of contradiction to some cherished prejudice or habit of mind, and only after that by way of a super-exaltation of the natural man. To the people of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries physical deformity was peculiarly abhorrent : instinctively they worshipped physical vitality and wholesomeness, and to the romanticists this physical wholesomeness was as a sacrament of their faith in the visible world. So in Francis it was not so much fastidiousness of nature which had made him avoid the leper and shrink painfully from physical deformity ;[1] it was rather that his belief in life did not take in such unseemliness as the leper and the cripple, and that their presence was in some sort a witness against him. He could only keep his faith and joy in life by relegating them to the sphere of avoided mystery. That was in fact the crucial weakness of his early romance : it baffled and mocked at him and at his belief that life was meant to be all joy and sunshine. If he met a deformed beggar or leper by the wayside, he quickly gave his alms in pity and hurried past in dread. But when the spiritual crisis came to him he was drawn in spite of himself to that which he had hitherto avoided as to the mystery which held the truth

[1] It will be remembered that one of the severest temptations which assailed Francis at the outset of his religious life was the mental suggestion that a life of penance might lead to physical deformity. Cf. *Leg. 3 Soc.*, 12.

he was seeking. So one day when he was riding in the plain outside Assisi and was accosted by a leper, he at once threw him an alms and urged forward his horse in his usual way; but suddenly drew rein and dismounted and embraced the leper: and in the embrace had his eyes opened. The repugnance he had hitherto felt gave way to an absorbing sense of compassion which knit his soul to that of the leper in his misery. As he afterwards rode home Francis felt that the world was changed for him. Suffering and helplessness and deformity had lost their sting: he was dimly conscious that they veiled a possible world of moral and spiritual beauty hitherto unknown to him. Joy was to be no longer sought for exclusively or even supremely in the delight of the senses, nor in the glory of physical prowess, nor in the acclamation of the world. The deeper joy lay elsewhere. For the moment it was mingled mysteriously with a newly formed pity for the leper, a pity, be it remembered, which drew the leper to his very heart.

In that new pity for the leper the special faith of the Franciscan had its origin, and out of it proceeded the essential Franciscan spirit. From this point of view pity is the most fundamental Franciscan sentiment, and not merely a sentiment but the emotional form under which he realizes the Gospel as his personal rule of life. For the great fact in the experience of St. Francis when he made himself the friend of the leper, was not so much his new pity nor even the unexpected sweetness he found in embracing the leper, but the new spiritual perception which came to him with the pity. His religious faith had become a quickening vision of life: the world which for some time had been to him a puzzling mystery was now clearly revealed as the arena in which the Divine Pity was doing battle for the world's redemption. That Divine Pity he

now perceived as the great reality in the world's life, the one thing that really mattered: and it was incarnate in Jesus Christ the Redeemer. Straightway as his vision became clear to him his heart went out in submission to Christ the Pitiful as to the Lord of his entire allegiance and "the master light of all his seeing"; and from that moment the desire of Francis was to conform himself to his Divine Lord, the world's Redeemer. The full significance of his awakened faith was not at once apparent to him: it came to him in the process of readjusting his own life. The stricken in body and the despised poor, to whom the glory of the world was denied, these no longer entered into his view as beings whose existence was a troublesome mystery; he began to see them as heaven-sent witnesses to the truth which he had found. He had thirsted for life, and never had he lived so deeply as in his newly awakened pity for the lepers. In his pity these and all despised ones of the world now became sacred: for he had found in them a new bond of fellowship with the world and with Christ: and through them he had come to an understanding of the Christ-life of the Gospel which at once captured his own deeper desire and spiritual aspiration and set him on the road to spiritual contentment. He saw our Lord in His Divine pity accepting poverty and suffering that so He might redeem the world. This poverty and suffering of Christ came home to him as a pure expression of the Divine love seeking to restore the fallen world. But—and here we come to an essential Franciscan attitude of mind—if Christ accepted for Himself poverty and suffering, there must be some potential sacredness and nobility in all poverty and suffering. To the Franciscan mind every poor man, inasmuch as he was poor, had a reflected glory from "the Poor Christ," and his poverty was blessed, since through it

he might attain to the figurement of Christ and was already in some way made akin to Christ. In this belief Francis was led to regard poverty as in some sort a sacrament by which men might find spiritual fellowship with our Lord and a participation in the Christ-life.

But the question now is : In what way did the faith of St. Francis apprehend the Christ-life so that this became the vitalizing principle of Franciscan story ? Had it been merely the pity of our Lord that St. Francis worshipped, the Franciscans might have fulfilled their whole vocation as a nursing brotherhood for the lepers : had it been merely evangelical poverty viewed apart from the further mystery of our Lord's life, they might have become preachers of poverty somewhat after the fashion of the protesting sects even whilst retaining their orthodoxy. But, as is well known, St. Francis and the Franciscans fulfilled a larger function in the life of the Catholic Church : they were the exponents of a religious piety which quickened Catholic devotional Thought at its very base and sent a vitalizing influence throughout the whole of Catholic life. The Franciscan apprehension of the mystery of our Lord's life was, then, of that larger nature which had something universal in its character and responds to some more fundamental need of the human spirit.

We shall perhaps best understand it by a comparison of Franciscan piety itself with the earlier mediaeval devotion of which indeed Franciscan piety was but a further development.

The dominant note in all mediaeval piety was its rapturous devotion to the person of our Lord in His immediate relationship with the world of men. St. Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo ?*—Why did God become Man ?—was the wondering question which quickened the religious mind

of the Middle Ages with a devout speculation and fired the religious heart with a worshipful love. Men asked the question not in a spirit of doubt or academic curiosity ; but because the great fact in their spiritual life was that God had become Man : and it was a fact that lay very near to the strong human feeling which revivified the Middle Ages in the twelfth century. In Jesus Christ they saw God made Man ; and in our Lord's Sacred Humanity they saw human nature itself restored to its destined dignity and beheld there, as in a mirror, the perfect humanity. It might be said with truth that in the twelfth century human nature was keenly in love with itself. Catholic piety transcended this sentiment and yet fulfilled it in its worship of the Incarnate God and in the homage it gave to the purified humanity of the Blessed Virgin. In our Lord it saw the absolute human perfection—absolute inasmuch as it was the expression of a Divine Personality in human nature, in the Blessed Virgin and in a lesser degree in other saints, it saw our common mortality purified and sublimated by its nearness to the Humanity of our Lord. Between our Lord and the saints, even the Blessed Virgin, there was always that impassable gulf which separates the Divine from the creaturely, the absolute from the relative. Jesus Christ was God even as He was Man : He was moreover *the* Man, possessed of all human perfection in an absolute sense which can never be thought of in regard to any other creature. The sense of His humanity, therefore, was always shrouded in a splendid mystery : His human perfection was beyond the achievement of common humanity even at its holiest : yet in our Lord's Humanity does all human nature find its own potential nobility and perfection. So from its love of itself the human spirit in the twelfth century rose to the love of our Lord's Humanity

as that which was itself and yet beyond itself, and in union with which it would most truly find itself and its proper relationship with God. That was the root principle in all the later mediaeval piety.

But still the problem remained: how was this union with our Lord in His Humanity and through His Humanity with the Divine Life to be achieved? Here another sentiment came into play, from the sense of the unworthiness of our common human nature with its sin and imperfection, to share in the glorious nobility of the utterly perfect humanity of our Lord. In this sense of unworthiness the piety of the twelfth century was completely abashed: it knew but one attitude of mind in which it might lawfully and without presumption approach our Lord, and that was the attitude of entire humility. Yet it was a humility inspired by love. Unworthy as it might be, its gaze was held in tender worship by the perfection which humbled its own imperfection; and in this worshipful contemplation the purest religious spirits of the twelfth century lived and found their life. Contemplation and humility, then, were the active principles in the Catholic piety of the twelfth century: and by these two principles mainly it sought to enter into the Christ-life.

Now it was emphatically in His relations with the human soul itself that this earlier piety viewed and apprehended our Lord; and with the human soul in its most intimately personal affection. In the language of St. Bernard, the clearest exponent of twelfth-century piety, our Lord was in His Sacred Humanity, the Divine Bridegroom with whom our common humanity properly seeks to be espoused, being drawn to Him by the beauty of His perfection: and this ideal dominated the whole of Catholic mysticism in the Middle Ages. But in the pre-

Franciscan piety the rapturous worship of our Lord which this ideal enkindled, tended to sequester the human soul from the world at large ; to make it wholly intent upon the vision of our Lord's Person, as the Object of the soul's true love. In its character and quality twelfth-century piety may be likened to an impassioned love lyric : it expended itself in the contemplation, quickened by humility, of our Lord's Person as the Desired of the heart : to know that Christ lived was its supreme joy ; to live in His presence was its cherished delight.

Jesu dulcis memoria
Dans vera cordis gaudia,
Sed super mel et omnia,
Ejus dulcis præsentia.[1]

So sang the heart of the twelfth century as it looked upon the Christ it loved. But the fact in our Lord's life which evoked the deepest emotion of the religious mediaeval spirit and struck the tenderest chord, was His self-humiliation in consorting with our sinful nature in order to raise it up. This self-humiliation of the God-Man was the amazing mystery as it was also the uttermost expression of the Divine Love for man. " He humbled Himself, being made obedient even unto death "—that was the truth to which this mediaeval piety persistently reverted : and in this self-humiliation of our Lord it found a yet further reason for its own humility of soul. In humility—the humility of love—Christ came to us ; in loving humility we shall attain to Him. Humility, therefore, was the dominant note in twelfth-century piety, whether we regard

[1] This hymn, commonly attributed to St. Bernard, certainly derives its inspiration from St. Bernard's writings, and it is one of the purest expressions of Bernardine piety.

it as expressing the attitude of the soul in the presence of Christ or as the form under which it immediately beheld the Christ-life itself: only we must remember it was the humility of love; not a servile humility.

Now this twelfth-century piety entered into the Franciscan life and was essentially bound up with its spirit: but Franciscan piety marks a yet further development. The Franciscan mind regarded our Lord in His relations with the world in a wider aspect and identified itself with Him in this larger relationship. To St. Francis our Lord was not only the "Spes Suspirantis animæ"—the Hope of the sighing soul; He was also in a far wider sense the "Spes mundi"; He was not only "my King," He was "Lord of the Earth". For the Franciscan spirit was vividly conscious of the inter-relationship of the visible world, and that consciousness was carried explicitly into its worship of the God-Man. The external world and not only the world within a man's soul called to the Christ in the worship of the Franciscans, and it called to him in a two-fold way; as to the Crown of its own perfections and as to the Divine Sharer in its burdens. If the glory of the Christ-life was in some measure reflected in the godly man, it was also revealed in "Brother Sun," who in his radiant splendour is "of The Most High, a true revealer". Moreover, the Incarnate God is Lord of creation, not only in the sense that He is Lord of all creatures individually considered, but also of creation considered in its mutual relationships. In the very fullest sense therefore the Franciscan saw the whole visible world as the kingdom of the God-Man: inasmuch as in Christ the entire visible creation finds the sovereign law and perfection of its own being.

Yet it was in our Lord's relationship with the world as its Redeemer that Franciscan piety, true to its Catholic

instinct, found the immediately impelling motive of its worship. St. Francis had started life with an instinctive belief that the world was good to live in. That belief came back to him, intensified though transformed, in the unfolding of his faith in the Christ-life which glorifies the world. But his religious conversion was brought about through his awakening to the fact that the world was at war with itself and out of harmony with his native instinct; his early idealism had failed him in his first serious essay into the world's life. Then, as we have seen, in his pity for the leper a new light had dawned upon his soul and he saw the world bathed in the tender radiance of the Divine Love and Jesus Christ battling in His pity to restore the earth; and so his idealism rose up again, renewed, but with a difference. He had now become conscious of a value in suffering and poverty. The begging leper stood before him as a symbol of the world as it is afflicted and burdened through the sin of man, yet comforted and ennobled by the redeeming love of our Lord. The sense of sin, which is the beginning of true religious conversion, now entered into his conscious view of the world: and sin was self-seeking, the worship of self. Through this self-seeking man had put himself out of his right relationship with the world and with God; in his lust of the earth as his own possession, subject to his own will, man had really put himself into opposition to the larger life about him: and as all tyranny tends to exclude the tyrant from the free and real life of that over which he tyrannises, so man in his lust of dominion had closed against himself the heart of the world, and so had become a veritable stranger to the deeper spiritual life of things and to the life of God which is revealed in the world's spiritual life. To regain one's proper fellowship with the world, and so to find one's own true life, this

lust of dominion must be cast out and a man must come to the world's life in loving dependence upon it as drawing upon its bounty.

That was the truth St. Francis arrived at in the process of his conversion: it became a saving faith as he turned to our Lord and saw how He had come into the world without any of those means by which men commonly impose their will upon the world. Our Lord had neither wealth nor social position. He made Himself one with the poor and lowly; and in His poverty and lowliness opposed Himself to the world's selfishness and vanity; He made Himself dependent in His earthly condition upon the good-will of men, and thus opposed Himself to the arrogance of the world.

Now just as our Lord in the absolute perfection of His Sacred Humanity is the Arch-type of all created life, so in His actual life on earth, when He took upon Himself the burden of our fallen humanity, He is the moulding Form of our earthly life in its striving to regain its true relationship with God. In taking to Himself the poverty, suffering, contempt, and all the other hardships of the world's life, our Lord in His own Person endowed them with a spiritual significance and vitality: they were the means by which the sinful self-seeking of man was to be cast out and the world be brought back to its true life in conformity with the Christ-life. Hence to St. Francis poverty and lowliness and suffering wherever found upon the earth, even the suffering of the brute creature, had a sort of sacramental value: through them the spirit of man enters into conformity with the redeeming life of Christ, inasmuch as they are a protest against the world's sin.

Thus, then, to the mind of St. Francis there came the figure of "the Poor Christ" accepting poverty and lowli-

ness and suffering in order that He might drive out of the world the pride and greed and arrogance which had put the world's life out of joint and set it in opposition to its true ideal, the life which is in Christ Himself.

We have likened the piety of the twelfth century to an impassioned love lyric. By contrast we might liken Franciscan piety to a *chanson d'aventure*, the chivalric romance of adventure : its burden, the glory of the peerless King and His battle on behalf of a captive world against its enemies, pride and greed and arrogance. For in its ultimate form Franciscan piety sought to identify itself with our Lord in His work for the world's restoration. By entering with our Lord into the poverty and lowliness and suffering of the world it would endeavour to regain man's true relationship with the earth and with God, that so the Christ-life might find its reflection in the conscious life of the whole created world. That was what the vision of " the Poor Christ " meant to St. Francis and his followers.

V

It cannot be too clearly borne in mind that the Franciscan movement was essentially a religious movement, and that its religion was the Catholic religion. As we have seen, the Franciscan life was formed in the worship of Jesus Christ in His poverty, humility, and suffering; but from what we have already noticed, it will be plain that the immediate purpose of this devotion to the poverty of Christ was the "restoration" of human nature itself in conformity with the life revealed in the Person of our Lord. And to the spiritual vision of St. Francis our Lord stood revealed as in very truth the Lord of all the earth, not only in virtue of His Godhead, but also because of the unique and absolute perfection of His Sacred Humanity. Behind the poverty and lowliness of our Lord's earthly condition was His inherent majesty—a majesty at once divine and creaturely. This inherent majesty of Christ was the real and ultimate object of Franciscan worship: poverty was dear to the Franciscan soul as a redemptive means by which the world is restored to union with the glorious Humanity of our Lord and through that with the life of God.

But the majesty of our Lord as Lord of the earth in virtue of His Sacred Humanity is shared in some measure by all created things in so far as their life is in harmony with His: and this majesty of the creaturely world, manifested in power and splendour and beauty, whether of the physical order or of the moral and spiritual, is therefore proper to the world's life and to be reverenced as a gift of

God. Moreover, there is in all creatures and peculiarly in man a certain rightful possession of the earth which belongs to his very being in its higher spiritual development : else there were wanting a full conformity to the Sacred Humanity of Christ. As it is true that the rich man must be poor in spirit in order to be Christ's disciple, so is it equally true that the poor man must be rich in spirit even in regard to the earth, if he is to be like to Christ. To deny this proposition were to fall into the heresy of the Manichean ; and in fact it was in practical denial of this sort that many of the reforming sects in the Middle Ages and since, became tinged with Manicheanism. St. Francis and the Franciscans in their Catholic spirit recognized that the earth was a rightful possession of the children of God as they share in the lordship of Christ. But they emphasized the distinction between, on the one hand, the essential and spiritual possession which belongs to the inner life of man and is a condition of his spiritual development, and, on the other hand, that contingent possession which is attached to a man's material welfare and the formation of secular society. Spiritual possession is obtained when mind and heart are enlarged in their intercourse with the external world, and a man takes to himself the truth and beauty and pathos which lies at the heart of things. This, after all, is the deepest and most enduring possession in the world's life which man is capable of : it is the one sort of possession which really enriches a man's own spirit and makes him more a man. And it is this spiritual possession which gives the ultimate moral sanction to material possession ; since, at least from the Christian point of view, material wealth is of spiritual value only in so far as it assists the world to realize the higher, spiritual possession : as, for example, when the ownership of an estate brings home to a man his

responsibility for the lives of those dependent upon him : or when material splendour is used to attune the mind to the majesty of life itself. But, at least for the individual, this material possession is not necessary for his spiritual development, and may in fact become a hindrance to it ; whereas spiritual possession is of the very essence of the life which the Catholic faith finds in the Sacred Humanity of Jesus Christ. Our Lord as Man possessed the world in virtue of His understanding and love of all created life ; or, to express the Franciscan view more accurately, in virtue of His understanding love. For to St. Francis the sovereign quality of life and personality was love and the intelligence which is born of love. So as he gazed upon our Divine Lord he saw Him gathering created life unto Himself and refashioning it in the image of God by His vast love of all that is. Hence in his worship of the Christ-life, love became to St. Francis the moving impulse of his relations with the world. It was this Christ-like love which gave him his understanding of the heart of the sinner and his joy in the beauty of life ; which made him a preacher to the birds and the singer of the " Canticle of Brother Sun ".

We have already pointed out how in his economic dependence upon alms St. Francis sought to enter into an entire relationship of fraternal charity with his fellow-men.[1] The same principle runs through his conception of personal authority and obedience. Taking the example of Christ as the supreme law, St. Francis would have none of his followers exercise authority " after the manner of the Gentiles " by assuming a personal dominion over the wills of others ; they were rather after the example of our Lord to minister to the needs of others.[2] Authority he

[1] *Vide supra*, pp. 13–17.

[2] *Vide* Regula I, cap. 4 ; Regula II, cap. 10.

regarded as a trust put into a man's hands not for his own interest or self-glorification, but for the benefit of the subject and to be administered in the spirit of comradeship. A selfish use of authority he held to be as much a betrayal of Christian charity as is the disobedience of those who from self-love refuse to obey. To emphasize this truth, he ordained that in the Franciscan fraternity superiors should assume no title which suggested personal pre-eminence; they were to be styled "ministers" or "guardians". On the other hand, obedience, as laid down by St. Francis, is a willing submission of oneself from love of God and one's neighbour, even as Christ obeyed unto death. In the Rule of 1221 the rule of obedience is thus set forth: "Let no brother do evil or speak evil to another; nay rather by the charity of the Spirit let them voluntarily serve and obey each other; and this is the true and holy obedience of our Lord Jesus Christ".

Both in the matter of begging and in that of obedience, it is the humility of love which urges St. Francis; that humility of love which entered so deeply into all mediaeval devotion. By this humility Jesus Christ came into relationship with the world for its redemption: by it, too, every man may recover his own true relationship with the world around him. Thus poverty and obedience armed the soul in its battle against greed and pride in order that Christ-like love might reign supreme and be the bond between each man and the world, and between the world and God. Thus, as formulated by St. Francis, these two principles of poverty and obedience, which, as frequently understood, seem to militate against the freedom of personal life, are really the conditions by which man acquires a more intimate relationship with the larger life of the world and finds a greater freedom; and in that freedom comes into a deeper, because more spiritual, enjoyment of life.

In this faith the early Franciscans lived and found a new joy in the society of their fellow-men, as is evident in all their most intimate literature such as the *Fioretti*. Instead of the satisfaction which men commonly find in the arrogant assumption of power over their fellows, or in the selfish accumulation of wealth, they had the purer joy of being at one with the hearts of men. This joy is one of the palpitating delights of the Franciscan Legend. It gave them a sort of vested interest in all human life. As one follows their story, they seem to exult in the presence of human nature and in its conflicts and achievements, with the genuine interest of a man who is not tired of his own soul. They were men of wide human sympathies and of a true understanding of the human heart: and to this was due their very real power over the hearts of all sorts of men. One may recall as instances of the story of St. Francis himself, the conversion of the three robbers of Monte Casale;[1] his intercourse with the Sultan of Egypt;[2] his intervention as peace-maker[3] between the Bishop of Assisi and the magistrates: but similar instances were common in the lives of the friars. The most notable witness to this persuasive power of the Franciscans is, however, the general affection with which they were regarded by the people at large, and their dominance over the imagination of the thirteenth century.

But it was not only with their fellow-men that the Franciscans entered into a real communion of spirit. As we have already remarked, in their piety they voiced the worship of the whole wide universe, not merely of the human soul; and in this they reverted to that earlier

[1] *Speculum Perfectionis*, cap. 66; *Fioretti*, cap. 25.
[2] I Celano, 57; *Leg. Maj.*, IX. 8.
[3] *Speculum Perfectionis*, cap. 101.

patristic devotion which gave to the Church those wonderful "Nature hymns," such as *Nox et tenebræ et nubila*, which form part of the daily offices of the Catholic Church. But there was just this difference between this patristic attitude towards Nature and the Franciscan. The patristic hymnologists viewed Nature with admiration, the Franciscans regarded it with affection.[1] The difference will be seen at once if one compares these earlier hymns with the "Canticle of Brother Sun": it is a difference akin to that which separates the Nature-poetry of Shakespeare from that, let us say, of Milton. For the Franciscan was conscious of Nature, not so much as something outside and apart from himself, but rather as the world in which he had his being: it entered intimately into his very consciousness of himself: it was, so to speak, his larger self, much in the same way as the patriot regards his country. Hence it was in simple sincerity that St. Francis would speak of "Brother Wolf"; of "our sisters the birds"; of "Brother Sun"; of "our mother, Sister Earth". Nature to him was a vast brotherhood and he felt himself borne upon the stream of universal life: and in all this life he saw a kinship with the Sacred Humanity of Jesus Christ.

It is to be noted that this sense of fellowship with Nature came to St. Francis with his life of poverty. Before his conversion he was evidently sensitive to natural beauty. He loved, for instance, to gaze out over the wide-spreading valley of Spoleto and feast his eyes and heart upon its wonderful fairness. But that was different from his intercourse with Nature in after years. Thomas of Celano takes

[1] Father Kent in *The Tablet*, February 26, 1916, called attention to the close kinship between the Franciscan attitude towards Nature and that of St. Ephram the Syrian. In the text we had in mind the hymnologists of the West.

note of this fact when, recording the saint's first sermon to the birds, he remarks that Francis "had become simple by grace; he was not so by nature". In the earlier days the attraction which drew Francis to gaze out over the wide valley in the felt sensation of delight, which is essentially egoistic. After his conversion it was a true unselfish love of birds and beasts and all created things which bound him in links of spiritual communion with the very soul of Nature and caught him up so truly into all created life that he could no longer look upon the earth but as something palpitating with a life akin to his own, nor regard himself but as in very deed a brother to all things as well as to all men. A similar consciousness of Nature is usually found amongst people who live close to Nature's ways and is lost to those who immerse themselves in artificial conditions of existence or who turn their hearts upon themselves. With Nature as with men, access to the heart is gained by simplicity and unselfishness: and so far the poor—at least the poor in spirit—have an advantage. Many a native dweller in the hills, untouched by the ambition for wealth which builds up our industrial towns, is rich in his fellowship with a world to which men of the towns are strangers. To him the earth and the sky have a voice: they respond to the call of his soul; and in their company he is not alone. Of such sort was St. Francis's fellowship with all living things. He had, too, that sensitive feeling for life under any form, which is often found in those who live close to Nature's ways. Wanton destruction was to him a sort of sacrilege, a violation of the quasi-sovereign claim of each creature to its own life. He would pick up a worm from the road and put it in a safer place lest it be trodden on and killed. When a tree had to be cut down he would beg that at least one shoot should be left to carry on its life. He

even scrupled to quench a fire or to put out a light. So sacred was all life in his eyes.[1]

Moreover, he had a keen sense of the close relationship between the physical world and the moral and spiritual world. For instance, he saw a purity in water which inherently prefigured moral purity in man ; the bountifulness of Mother Earth was a true counterpart to the bounty which should come from man's good will ; the song of the lark was a true worship of God which men do well to carry over into their own deliberate act.[2] By the instinctive law of its being Nature was thus bound up with the moral and spiritual life in man. Hence when St. Francis in his speech endowed Nature with a sort of moral and spiritual consciousness, it was no mere fanciful imagery, but an expression of his felt relationship between man as a free agent and Nature in its instinctive God-given life. He was conscious that in his endeavour to conform himself to the Divine Law, he was drawing closer to the law by which all things exist. He thus realized the moral and spiritual law of man's life as the complement to the natural law which governs the world's existence. And in this sense he saw all Nature ministering to man's spiritual life ; except indeed as man by his own act has enslaved Nature to his own sin, and taken from it its own proper freedom : and in this St.

[1] *Vide Speculum Perfectionis*, ed. Sabatier, cap. 115 : "Nor is it to be wondered at that fire and other creatures were at times obedient to him and reverenced him ; for as we who were with him have oftentimes seen, he had so great an affection towards them, and so greatly delighted in them, and his spirit was moved with so great a compassion for them, that he would not see them treated unfairly, and he would talk with them with gladness both inward and outward, as if they had reason : and oftentimes in speaking to them he was rapt up to God" (cf. *ibid.*, cap. 116 ; I Celano, 80).

[2] *Vide* e.g. *Speculum Perfectionis*, cap. 113.

Francis saw again that lust of dominion which destroys the freedom of life.

Yet with St. Francis this consciousness of the great world beyond man as being bound up with the life of man, did not stop here: it carried him on to the sublimer realization of all created life as bound up with the Sacred Humanity of Jesus Christ. To speak more accurately we should say that it was in the apprehension of the relationship of our Lord to the world, that St. Francis came to the understanding of life which we have described. From the time of his conversion he came to regard all Nature as gathered around our Lord and yearning for that life in God which has its ultimate expression in the Sacred Humanity. In their own natural life all creatures—each in its own degree—mirrored the life in Christ: in its actual life as touched by the sin of man, they were all awaiting that deliverance which Christ in His redeeming love was to bring to them; and meanwhile the creation which depended upon man's will, was sharing with Christ the burden of man's guilt. So in the physical creation St. Francis saw both the glory and humiliation of our Lord Himself. When he sang his "Canticle of Brother Sun" he was praising the beauty of Christ as exhibited in the beauty of the physical world;[1] when he looked with compassion upon a lamb led to the slaughter, he at the same time sorrowed for the crucified Saviour.[2] Nor was the lamb a mere figure of our Saviour. In paying the penalty of death it was drawn within the scheme of the world's redemption. For in accepting death for Himself, Christ had accepted death for His creatures: and in accepting it, had taken to Himself the whole sorrow of the world;

[1] Cf. *Speculum Perfectionis*, cap. 119 *ad finem*.
[2] Cf. I Celano, 79.

since if they suffered, He suffered infinitely more in their sorrow because of His love for them. Thus there was a vital connexion in the mind of St. Francis between the slaughter of the lamb and the death of our Lord. By the will of Christ the lamb was taken into the mysterious act of redemption; and in the suffering lamb, Christ Himself suffered by compassion. So in all created life St. Francis saw a mystic union with the Christ-life Itself; and creatures, whether in their glory or in their suffering, drew him more closely to the Divine life he worshipped, whilst he on his part made them his companions in his worship.

Some there are who have thought to discover in St. Francis a pantheist; but that is because they have failed to grasp the Catholic doctrine of the Incarnation. The saint's attitude towards Nature is rightly intelligible only in the light of that doctrine. Always he was conscious of Christ the Lord standing over against the world and never wholly of the world: united indeed to our common humanity, and through our humanity with all creation, by the free act of His own love; yet always the God who stands outside creation. In truth the delight of St. Francis in the visible world finds its very point in his perception of the infinitely incomprehensible mystery beyond it. He gazes into the world he understands, and is conscious all the while of that which he cannot comprehend, and knows that though life is endless he will yet never comprehend it: and yet at the same time he knows that that Divine mystery beyond him is reflected in the world he sees, and that this world of vision is the creature of the Divine Hand. In all his growing intercourse with Nature one hears that cry of his freedom on the day of his disinheritance: "Now I can truly say: Our Father Who art in heaven!" The more

closely he drew to creatures the more his heart expanded in the felt sense of the Divine Life beyond creation. And after all, man is made that way : take away from him the incomprehensible mystery and you at once limit his capacity for delight in the things he does comprehend : and because of that, pantheism or any other form of naturalism in religion, has always issued in a cry of despair. But despair had no place in the soul of St. Francis : his life issued in a song of joy.

There was yet another sphere of the world's life into which St. Francis entered as one discovering hidden values, and that was the Catholic Church. His loyalty to the Church is unquestionable ; but it is not always recognized that his loyalty was fostered in a passionate personal conviction of the sacramental character of the Church. He did not accept her merely because, so to speak, she was there and in possession : to him she was really the great mother of Christian souls, and he loved her institutions and her very name with the love of a son and of a patriot. No sooner did he think of founding a fraternity than of his own accord[1] he went to the Pope, "the Father of all Christians," to obtain his sanction and blessing, and to the end he was constantly referring to the Holy See for guidance. Moreover, whatever stood for the life and authority of the Church was peculiarly sacred in his sight : his intense reverence for priests and theologians is an outstanding fact in his story ; so, too, is his abhorrence of heresy ; and again his tender love for the Blessed Sacrament of the altar. His whole history justifies the eulogium of him as *homo totus Catholicus et totus Apostolicus*, a man entirely loyal to the Catholic

[1] This seems quite evident from his encounter with Bishop Guido, recorded in *Leg.* 3 *Soc.*, 47.

Church and to the Apostolic See. Only when we take him as such can we explain him consistently with all we know about him.

But here again the Franciscan worship of the Poor Christ sounded an intimately personal note : it brought the Church into more direct touch with the individual soul, and with the world at large by a simpler appeal to human nature itself. The Franciscan influence has sometimes been said to have "popularized" Catholicism and to have brought the dogmas and institutions of the Church home to the hearts of the multitude : but it did this not by emptying these dogmas and institutions of their deeper import, but simply because the Franciscan apprehended Catholicism more immediately in its response to the direct call of the human heart. The Church, as it appealed most forcibly to St. Francis, was not a mere legal system or institution ; it was not an impersonal presentment of truth : it was above all else the expression of the heart of Christ yearning to restore the world to conformity with Himself. The story of the Porziuncola indulgence precisely exhibits the Franciscan mind in this respect. The greater indulgences in the Middle Ages were all connected with the social restoration of the Christian world—the recovery of the Holy Land, the maintenance of the great centres of Catholic pilgrimage. St. Francis obtained a similar indulgence for all who should visit the Porziuncola on the simple condition that they confessed their sins and were contrite of heart. In the granting of the Porziuncola indulgence the Church exercised her prerogative of mercy in favour of the individual without reference to the external need of the Christian world at large. The indulgence was an act of mother-love, more than of judicial power : as St. Francis in the traditional story represents it when brushing aside the official prudence

of the Curia he exclaimed :[1] " My Lord Pope, I ask not for years but for souls ". The spirit of this great Pardon is on all the apostolic work of the Franciscans. They emphasized the maternal office of the Church more than the legal and judicial ; the immediate relationship of the Church to the individual soul more than that of the Church to the social organism. The aspect of the Church's sovereignty which they most directly gazed upon was that which she wields by virtue of the divine pity and love for the world, which belongs to her genius and character. She was in their eyes emphatically the spouse of the Poor Christ and mother of the world as it looks to Him for the restoration of the personal life of man and of the world at large in its relationship to man's personal life. Hence to St. Francis and the Franciscans, and through Franciscan influence, to the Catholic world at large, the institutions and worship of the Church revealed themselves with a new and more tender significance as they were brought more closely into relations with the hearts of men. The legal system of the Church by which the Christian world was brought to a consciousness of its social life, was touched with a more vivid human feeling and showed a more intimate consideration for the peculiar needs of the individual and for the due liberty of the human soul within the body corporate : as became evident in the tempering of the earlier rigid penitential discipline and in the growth of popular " devotions " side by side with liturgical worship. Again the mystical apprehension of the dogmas and sacraments of the Faith became more widely diffused amongst the people at large, as distinct

[1] The Pope desired to know for how many years the saint would have the indulgence granted. St. Francis requested that the indulgence should be granted in perpetuity. Cf. Bartholi, *Tract. de Indulg.*, ed. Sabatier, cap. 6, p. 15.

from the legal and conventional conception : which means that the teaching of the Church was set forth more generally in its direct appeal to the more intimately personal conscience of men. And yet again the appeal of the Church for right Christian living became more and more simply an appeal for individual loyalty founded in love, to the Person of our Lord. It was thus that the Franciscan devotion to the Church as the spouse of the Poor Christ drew forth into greater clearness and practical working the mother-love which is at the heart of Catholicism, and constitutes the Church as the mother of men, not merely of the impersonal Man.

Further, St. Francis with his conviction of the immediate relationship of all Nature with the personality of man, at the same time perceived the Church as bringing Nature itself into sacramental union with the Divine life of our Lord and with the Christian life of men. The sacraments of the Church by which through means of creaturely things Christ brings men into spiritual communion with Himself, were but a fitting corollary to life as he perceived it. He could never conceive of Nature as wholly and absolutely separate from the life in man, nor from the life of the Sacred Humanity of our Lord. " Every creature," he held, " cries out : God has made me on account of thee, O Man " ;[1] and this ministering of Nature to man's life St. Francis perceived in the most universal sense. To him the whole creation was one vast natural sacrament : and the sacramental system of the Church, created by the act of Christ, was but in accord with this natural sacramentalism of all created life.

We must not, however, imagine that St. Francis mentally worked up to the congruity of the sacraments of the Church from a notion of the sacramental character of Nature.

[1] *Speculum Perfectionis*, cap. 118.

Francis, we must remember, was not an intellectualist. It was rather in his spiritual perception of the value and significance of the sacraments of the Church that he came to perceive the natural sacramentalism of all created life. Just as in the worship of the Sacred Humanity of our Lord, St. Francis's native reverence for all human life was deepened, and acquired a more definite significance; so the Christian sacraments, in their assumption of material elements as the instruments of a spiritual act, made him aware of the sanctity which attaches to the whole material world when brought into union with the religious life of man. To his feeling the Church was the Church of all Nature as well as of man; and with a simple delight he would associate Nature itself with acts of Christian worship: as when he desired that special provision should be made for the feeding of birds and cattle on Christmas Day,[1] and in the case of the falcon which awakened him to matins each night on Monte Alvernia.[2] The Church had indeed from earliest times pressed natural objects into her service as sacramental signs and as symbols of her religious life: the new gain to Catholic worship which she received from the fostering influence of the Franciscan spirit was the greater freedom and sense of comradeship with which Nature was taken into the religious life of the Church. It shows itself in the religious art of the thirteenth and following centuries; in the spontaneous symbolism of the new popular devotions; as, for example, the Franciscan "Crib" which grew up beside, and finally displaced, the quasi-liturgical "representation of the Nativity"; and in the more general use of floral decorations in Divine worship, which were excluded by the more conventional spirit of an earlier time.

[1] *Speculum Perfectionis*, cap. 114. [2] II Celano, 168.

Thus did St. Francis in his worship of the Poor Christ perceive and utter what we may call the higher humanism of the Catholic spirit. That it was a gain to himself and the Christian world few will deny. That it brought to him and many hearts a new joy in life is certain. We need not wonder that, conscious of this gain, he hailed his "Lady Poverty" as the herald of life heavenly, and the revealer of true joy.

VI

We have elsewhere remarked that amongst the virtues more particularly lauded by the early Franciscans, simplicity vies with poverty in calling forth the warmest praise. Equally with poverty it was considered a fundamental trait in the Franciscan life and character. And in truth is it not the pure simplicity of the brethren, a simplicity manifest and regal, which more than all else is the immediate attraction in the story of St. Francis and his followers ? It is this which clothes their poverty with comeliness and floods the *Fioretti* as with the sun-burst of spring.

For Franciscan simplicity is not a negative quality implying merely ignorance of the world ; nor is it merely singleness of mind ; it is a pervading energy, an active quality of the Franciscan spirit. That much will be evident to anyone who knows his *Fioretti* or is conversant with the early Franciscan literature. The Franciscan spirit itself, and not merely the individual member of the fraternity, is imbued with a distinctive simplicity which gives it character and a quickening of life. In its simplicity the spirit of St. Francis is altogether alive and impresses itself as a vitalising influence upon whatever it subdues to itself : so that its presence is the certain hall-mark of things Franciscan, or at least of kinship with the Franciscan spirit.

Yet we may well ask what it is that makes the simplicity of St. Francis and his followers so generally convincing and

attractive ? Is it not that their simplicity reveals to us the spiritual beauty of the life lived in close companionship with the heart of things and governed wholly by a Christ-like love ? The simplicity of St. Francis was really a simplicity of love. He loved all things whether in heaven or earth as the Christ of his vision loved ; and this love became the ruling law of his being, so much so that he could conceive of no law save in the form of this Christ-like love. That is in truth the secret of Franciscan simplicity.

We have already seen how Franciscan poverty was in its ultimate analysis nothing else than a confession of trust in the loving solicitude of God for His creatures and in the neighbourly goodwill which St. Francis conceived as the true social bond. But this belief in the supreme efficacy of love to set a man right with God, his fellow-creatures and his own soul, is at the root of the whole scheme of life as accepted by the early Franciscans, and manifests itself clearly in all their conduct. The heroism of St. Francis consisted ultimately in the entire abandonment of himself to this ruling principle and his steady adherence to it in spite of that actual experience of the world, which is summed up in the dictates of " worldly prudence ". It may be said, and said rightly, that this prudence of the world which St. Francis seemed to esteem so lightly, has a validity of its own : nor did he himself deny it. But worldly prudence belongs to a sphere of life with which he was not directly concerned. The proper concern of the Franciscan is with the human spirit itself in its personal relationship with God and its fellow-creatures : and in this sphere St. Francis knew no law but the love with which he saw Christ restoring the world.

It was this which made the Franciscan rule at once so stringent and yet so free. Take, for example, the con-

ceptions of government and obedience which St. Francis enshrined in the Rule of 1221: "None of the brethren shall have any power or domination, especially amongst themselves. For so the Lord says in the Gospel: The princes of the Gentiles lord it over them and they that are the greater, exercise power upon them: it shall not be so amongst the brethren; but whosoever shall be the greater amongst them, let him be their minister and servant; and he who is the greater amongst them let him become as the lesser. Neither shall any brother do evil or speak evil unto another; nay, rather by the charity of the spirit shall they voluntarily serve and obey each other. And this is the true and holy obedience of our Lord Jesus Christ."[1] Here both government and obedience are fused together as acts of mutual service and love. It is really the same principle fundamentally as underlies Franciscan poverty and mendicancy: in the acts of giving and receiving alms the giver and receiver exhibit their bond of mutual charity: so, too, in the exercise of authority and in obeying, superior and subject voluntarily serve each other "in the charity of the spirit". And just as for the safeguarding of the spiritual idea of poverty St. Francis would allow no title of property even in the things necessary for bodily subsistence; so the better to keep intact this spiritual obedience, he would allow no title of lordship or personal precedence to the superiors of the fraternity: they were to be called "ministers" or "guardians".

Thus the whole social economy of the Franciscans proceeded from the ideal of service having for its motive the evangelical law of love. Men in all their relations with their fellow-men were to be guided and ruled by "the charity of the spirit," not by any desire for personal

[1] Regula I, cap. 5.

gain or by ambition for power or other selfish motive: and this "charity of the spirit" was to prove itself in voluntary mutual service.

So far the Franciscan social ideal is that of a perfect democracy; of a society in which all the members are on an equality of comradeship, whatever be the accident of their place or position, and in which all, whether rulers or governed, are subject to the same law of personal service. But where the Franciscan democracy differs from the ordinary political democracy is, in the first place, that with the Franciscan, equality is generated in voluntary assumption of common duties and responsibilities and not in the assertion of individual rights. The Franciscan begins at the other end from that generally taken by the political democrat. He starts practically from the idea that he himself owes a duty to his neighbour rather than that his neighbour owes a duty to him; he is more concerned to curb his own arrogance and selfishness than to curb that of others; he is more willing to submit to the will of another than to claim another's submission to his will. In short the ideal Franciscan society is akin to that democracy of spirit which exists in the personal relations of all true men; only with the Franciscans this spiritual democracy took to itself a more intensive and universal character in so far as they had voluntarily freed themselves from those secular conditions in which a pure spiritual democracy seems hardly obtainable.

But whilst, on the other hand, the Franciscans in their conception of society approached nearly to the ideal democracy, yet, on the other hand, they were intensely imbued with that chivalrous spirit which expresses itself in loyalty to persons rather than to systems or ideas, and which finds its ultimate loyalty to some sovereign person-

ality: that chivalrous spirit which has made woman the sovereign of the house and kings the sovereigns of the battle-field, which personifies the mother-land and enshrines in the hearts of men some ideal hero as their guiding star. It is just in so far as the common life of a people excludes this strictly personal, or romantic, loyalty, that it loses its higher spiritual freedom and becomes a mere legal or conventional unit. The Franciscan social idea was through and through permeated with this feeling for a personal loyalty and devotion. The Sovereignty of the People taken abstractly would have made no appeal to the loyalty of St. Francis, but no man ever responded more swiftly to the sovereign claim of every man to the service of his neighbour. Society was in fact a brotherhood in the most intimate sense of the word, and therefore to be held together by bonds of mutual loyalties. But again, these mutual loyalties derived their ultimate sanction from the supreme loyalty which all individually and in common owe to Jesus Christ as the Lord of all our life. This conception of society was not a creation of the Franciscan mind: it has underlain the Catholic social system from the beginning of the Church. The peculiar feature of its Franciscan development was the simplicity with which it was realized in thought and acted upon.

One of the effects of this simplicity was a vivid sense of personal responsibility towards all who were in need whether bodily or spiritual. That this responsibility could be lightly shifted to the community at large was to the Franciscans unthinkable. They would certainly have been most persistent offenders against the Elizabethan poor-laws. So strong was this feeling amongst them that St. Francis, with all his horror of money as the symbol of the vice of avarice, was willing that the friars should in

urgent cases receive money for the relief of the lepers.[1] Whatever need a man was in, the friar must assist him in so far as he might do so. It was this principle which invested the friar with such varied activities as regards his fellow-men: which made him not only a preacher of the word but the nurse of the leper, the comforter of the oppressed, the helpmate of the poor, and the friend of the sinner. That, too, gave to his apostolate its clear human note: he was not an official dispensing a common duty; he was rather a fellow-man discharging a personal duty as between himself and his neighbour.

Another effect was that courtesy which was a recognized trait in the intercourse of the Franciscan with other men. The sense of equality which was inherent in the Franciscan social idea, was sublimated to a sense of personal dignity as attaching to all men in virtue of their relationship with Jesus Christ. The majesty of the Christ-life lay, as we have seen, upon all creation; and that sense of majesty had its corresponding personal action in the courtesy which in the Franciscan legend is considered an outstanding virtue; so much so that the discourteous friar was held to be no true friar.[2]

Yet another effect of Franciscan simplicity was the common tendency of the friars "not to believe evil of others"; they more easily credited men with virtue or at least with good intentions:[3] and this perhaps was in no small degree accountable for their peculiar influence for good. A man must be utterly demoralized if he is not strengthened or shamed by another's faith in his uprightness.

[1] Regula I, cap. 8. [2] Cf., e.g., I Celano, 76; *Fioretti*, cap. 36.
[3] Cf., e.g., I Celano, 46; II Celano, 182; Eccleston (ed. Little), p. 106. Cf. Regula II, cap. 2.

Thus their social life was an exemplification in the simplest form of the evangelical law of neighbourly charity. But it must be remembered that this law derived its impelling force from the vision of the Christ-life itself. "As Christ has loved us" was the implied rule of neighbourly feeling and service.

In the same simple and direct fashion the early Franciscans exhibited the "unworldliness" of the Gospel in their economic use of the material world. This use was, in Franciscan language, to be in accord with the poverty of Christ. The poverty of Christ implied two things: there was on the one hand the absence of legal and physical dominion, but on the other hand there was the spiritual joy in Nature itself. This twofold element is markedly shown in the primitive friaries. These were such as to keep the friar in mind that he was a follower of the Poor Christ: consequently they were "to resemble the cottages of the poor rather than the palaces of the rich".[1] Neither individually nor corporately had the friars the ownership of their dwellings, which they held at the will of others. The friary, moreover, was constructed upon the straightest principle of utility: it was planned to meet the more primary human needs rather than to supply the secondary comforts. At the same time even the poorest of these primitive friaries are far removed from any sense of squalor by a manifest feeling for the sincerity and dignity of Nature's own simplicity. Thus at Monte Casale the yet existing primitive friary, with its bare rafters and roughly hewn stone and whitewashed walls, is altogether in keeping with the woodland around it and with the rocky precipice it overlooks. The primitive house of St. Clare at San Damiano with all its narrowness and bareness has the felt

[1] *Constitutiones FF. Min. Cappuc.*, cap. 3.

charm of the simplicity which keeps the human spirit close to the elemental things of the natural world.

The note of artlessness in fact clings to all the creations of the genuine Franciscan spirit; whether you take the personal conduct of the friars as exhibited in the early biographies and chronicles; or their dwelling-places; or the organization of the fraternity: it is, moreover, impressed upon their uttered thought and literature. What makes the *Fioretti* the purest gem of Franciscan literature is just that the artlessness of its form is in harmony with the spiritual simplicity it seeks to exhibit: and in this harmony it is clearly true to Franciscan life. For undoubtedly there was a certain antagonism between the Franciscan spirit and self-conscious art. Thus in their preaching the friars were taught to avoid the studied tricks of oratory: earnestness and sincerity were preferred to elegance of speech.[1] Their dwelling-houses were devoid of architectural ornamentation, even stained-glass windows and the frescoed wall were banned.[2] They were not to have books curiously bound.[3] In their common life there was a notable absence of ceremoniousness. Fundamentally, however, this antagonism was akin to that which at all times exists between the pure romantic spirit and the classic form. For though in one sense the Franciscans held aloof from the world of art, yet in their very simplicity they produced artistic effects. Their very life, with its fine feeling for Nature and its strong human sympathies, lent itself so readily to art that in their self-utterance they constantly fell into the forms of art. St. Francis himself was the first of a long line of Franciscan singers and poets; in his

[1] Cf. Regula II, cap. 9; II Celano, 163 *seq.*; *Vita F. Ægidii*, in *Anal. Franc.*, III. p. 74.

[2] Cf. Eccleston, op. cit., pp. 99–100; *Constitutiones Narbon.*, 15–21. *Vide Spec. Perfect.*, cap. 9

[3] *Ibid.*, cap. 5.

creation of the crib at Greccio he set the example of those religious dramatizations which entered so largely into the work of the Franciscan apostolate. His discourses were often intensely dramatic in character, as when he appeared before the brethren at Greccio one Easter Day, in the guise of a pilgrim, to bring home to them a lesson of poverty. Even in his choice of localities one might perceive a sense of the fitness of things, akin to the feeling of art : thus he chose the idyllic homesteads of Greccio as the scene of his Christmas crib ; he went to Alvernia, so far removed from the haunts of men, so lonely in its height, when the mystery of the Stigmata was upon him ; in the rusticity of the Porziuncola he made his nearest approach to an earthly home. But whatever art we find in the life of St. Francis and his followers, was of that spontaneous sort which is first cousin to Nature itself. They were concerned merely to express the truth which they loved ; or rather, we should say, to live it : there was no striving after effect. With them life was felt to be greater than art : æstheticism was as repugnant to their simplicity as was rationalism. For that reason, perhaps, the Franciscans, whilst they inspired and indirectly fostered some of the greatest art of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, yet themselves produced few, if any, artists of the first rank.[1] The Franciscan spirit dwelt too close to the springs of life, was too impatient of externalism, to foster by its own proper effort art on a grand scale. Its own art was always the mere handmaiden of its own native simplicity. Yet for that reason, perhaps, its influence as an inspiration was the deeper and more universal.

[1] Concerning the influence of the Franciscans on architecture, poetry and painting, see Thode, *St. François d'Assise et les Origines de l'art de la Renaissance en Italie*, Vol. II.

VII

St. Francis has oftentimes been regarded, either for praise or blame, as an enemy of learning, and the scholastic achievements of his Order have been taken as evidence of a departure from the Franciscan spirit. That in course of years a number of the friars did wander from the original simplicity of the fraternity in their enthusiasm for scholastic knowledge it would be idle to deny. But at the same time it denotes an entirely false conception of Franciscan simplicity to conclude that intellectual effort—the intensive exercise of human thought—is foreign to that simplicity. Taken as a moral quality simplicity is not a negative thing but a positive and deliberate loyalty to the truth by which one lives. A man is simple intellectually, not when he ceases to think, but when his thought is an integral part of his whole spiritual life. The unsimple mind is properly that which regards truth and life as a plaything or as a mere external interest, which divorces thought from moral effort ; whose thinking has no immediate relation with the spiritual ideal by which real personal life grows and develops. What, then, Franciscan simplicity demanded was not that Franciscans should mentally vegetate, but that their thought and mental activity should be governed by life itself as they conceived it ; that it should be directed to the fulfilment of the Franciscan purpose, and that its character should reflect the working of the Franciscan spirit itself. In so far as they failed to respond to this demand the thought of the Franciscans would be untrue to the spirit of St. Francis.

But, on the other hand, it is inconceivable that so individual and vigorous a spiritual life as that of the first Franciscans should not generate an intensive mode of thought as distinctive in character as other aspects of Franciscan life. Had the fraternity produced no line of thinkers it would have been an evidence of unreality in the life which St. Francis preached. The question as to how far the Franciscan school-men remained true to the Franciscan spirit does not concern us in this place. Here we have but to consider the character and quality of the Thought which properly enters into the Franciscan life.

So much, however, has been said of St. Francis's opposition to learning that it may be well to point out precisely the learning or "acquired knowledge" against which he really did set himself.

In the first place, it should be noted that all the strong "sayings" of St. Francis in opposition to learning belong to that period of his history when he was standing at bay in defence of his ideal simplicity against an invasion into the fraternity of a spirit foreign to the Franciscan life. In the multitude of men who had joined the fraternity were a large number who but imperfectly grasped the ideal which animated the first brethren, and some who seem not to have grasped it at all. They were men who regarded the fraternity rather from the point of view of general utility to the Church at large than with any real appreciation of its own special character and vocation; they thought more of external activities than of the inner spirit: and this externalism at once brought them into collision with St. Francis. The question of establishing schools for the friars seems to have been mooted by these brethren, and was certainly mixed up with their general policy. The opposition of St. Francis to the establishment of schools in the Order has therefore to

be taken in connexion with the wider question as to whether the Order should develop from within or seek expansion by subservience to a spirit other than its own.

But there was also something in the character of the scholastic learning of the time, radically repugnant to Franciscan simplicity. Religion and politics and natural phenomena were all thrown into the stockpot of argument : the clever talker was a power : the man who could propound a theory and maintain it in debate was sure of a following. One can see at once how entirely antagonistic this would be to that utter sincerity of mind and heart which the Franciscan spirit peculiarly demanded. There is no greater tyranny over a man's spirit than the unbridled power of words and the lust of mental conceits : it is a tyranny even more subtly specious and intoxicating than the tyranny of wealth—and at least as destructive of the proper personal life. Hence we find St. Francis and the more spiritual Franciscans suspicious of cultivated oratory. The saint, says Thomas of Celano, " did not greatly love those who desire to be praised as orators rather than as preachers, and who speak with elegance and not with earnestness ".[1] But intellectualism—the pursuit of knowledge divorced from moral purpose—of whatever sort it might be, was regarded as inimical to Franciscan life. " St. Francis was grieved," writes Thomas of Celano, " if learning were sought to the neglecting of virtue, especially when ' each one did not abide in the vocation wherein he was called at the beginning '. ' My brethren,' he said, ' who are being led by curiosity after learning, will find their hands empty in the day of retribution. I would rather have them strengthened in the virtues so that when times of tribulation come they may

[1] II Celano, 164. Cf. *The Golden Sayings of Brother Giles*, trans. by Fr. Paschal Robinson, O.F.M., p. 91.

have the Lord with them in their distress. For tribulation is indeed coming (said he), wherein books shall be thrown into cupboards and hiding-places as useless.' He did not say this because the study of Scripture displeased him, but in order to withdraw the brethren in general from being over-anxious to learn, and because he would have them all accomplished in charity rather than smatterers in research."[1]

From all we know of St. Francis, Thomas of Celano's summing up of his mind on the question of learning and study seems accurate and just. He saw in the prevalent "curiosity after learning" and in the anxiety for book-knowledge, an insidious temptation to depart from the vocation in which the Franciscan friar "was called in the beginning". Yet that the biographer did not over-state the case where he says that the warnings were given "not because the study of Scripture displeased him," is evident from other witnesses. Thus St. Bonaventure tells how on one occasion St. Francis divided a volume of the Scriptures into separate parts which he distributed amongst the brethren so that all might read, since the fraternity was too poor to provide each brother with an entire copy.[2] Again we know from St. Francis's own words how greatly he reverenced "theologians and those who minister to us the divine word".[3]

What then St. Francis was insisting upon in his opposition to the scholastic brethren was not that the brethren should not seek for knowledge, but that they should not be curious for knowledge which was outside the purpose of their life or which had no direct relation to the achievement of the ideal of the Christ-life in which the fraternity was founded.

[1] II Celano, 195. Here, as in other places, I have availed myself of Mr. Ferrer Howell's excellent translation.

[2] *Epist. de 3 Quæst.* no. 10, in *Opera Omnia* (Quaracchi), vol. VIII, p. 334 *b*.

[3] Cf. *Testament. S. Francis.*

In other words, he was maintaining the principle that knowledge must be subservient to moral and spiritual living. This principle is of the very essence of personality spiritually conceived. Once you admit that a man's supreme achievement is to be the realization of his spiritual self, it follows that the acquisition of any knowledge which does not stimulate his spiritual life or tend to strengthen him in the loyalties which belong to his proper calling, is so much wasted effort; and not merely wasted effort but a positive distraction from the things which vitally concern him. The principle may indeed be interpreted and acted upon in a narrow sense which would place an illegitimate restriction upon a man's thought and spiritual liberty: but the principle itself is sound and incontrovertible. In practice it affects the quality of thought even more than the subjects upon which the thinking mind exercises itself. A subject may afford mere "barren knowledge" to one man and be a spiritual stimulus to another. There is one "saying" of St. Francis which taken alone might point to the vanity of the romantic tales of his day; yet we know that he and his companions found inspiration in these very tales and frequently used them in their conversation and discourses.[1] Similarly, though cultivated oratory was viewed with suspicion by St. Francis, yet we are told of St. Clare, than whom there is no purer exponent of the Franciscan spirit, that "she rejoiced to hear a well-spoken discourse, being convinced that the shell of well-chosen words enclosed a nut, the which she took to herself with a finer sense and tasted with a greater relish,"[2] though the biographer hastens to add that she deemed it "not less

[1] *Speculum Perfect.*, cap. 4. Cf. *ibid.*, cap. 72; *The Golden Sayings of Brother Giles*, p. 61.

[2] *Leg. S. Clarœ* (ed. Pennacchi), p. 51; *Litteratorium tamen gaudebat audire Sermonem*, etc.

provident to pluck a flower at times from a rude thorn than to eat fruit from a noble tree ". Evidently St. Clare had a feeling for literary expression and found it helpful for the better understanding of doctrine. But that of course was different from the ambition of the preacher more careful for his words than for the doctrine itself.

The opposition of St. Francis and some of the notable Franciscans of the first days to scholastic learning must not lead us to conclude that the proper Franciscan life had no place for thought and intellectual activity, or even for the arts in which thought expresses itself. We have already seen how a certain artistic instinct lay close to Franciscan simplicity. We might go further and say that art lay nearer to the Franciscan mind than did science since, as we shall see, there was that in the complexus of the Franciscan mind which lent itself more readily to artistic expression than to scientific definition: it was more given to intuitive vision than to logical reasoning: and it is a fact that the Franciscan contribution to the world's thought lies chiefly in the sphere of intuitive and affective knowledge. They produced indeed a number of speculative theologians and some scientific workers; yet where they obtained some sort of acknowledged supremacy was in the field of spiritual perception rather than in the more argumentative sciences.

The reason of this is not far to seek: it lies in the fact that the Franciscan spirit drew its motive power more directly from the heart than from the brain and was dominated more by affective emotion than by intellectual. In the language of philosophy, the interest of the Franciscans centred not so much upon the True as upon the Good. Objects of thought were to them as nothing except as these objects stirred their affections. It was a cherished

Franciscan principle that love and not knowledge was the efficient cause of blessedness. As Thomas of Celano says, St. Francis would have the brethren "accomplished in charity rather than smatterers in research". So, too, when Brother Giles asks St. Bonaventure whether the ignorant can correspond with God's goodness, as well as the learned, St. Bonaventure replies that love is sufficient.[1] Hence to perfect himself the Franciscan sought to advance in the love of God and his fellow-creatures: and to the fulfilment of this love knowledge itself was strictly subservient. Proper Franciscan thought, in fact, originated in the desire of the heart and was finally achieved when the heart was in possession of its desired. Hence the knowledge which did not subserve to the love of God and one's fellow-creatures was held to be a "mere curiosity after learning" and "a scattering of the energies of the heart".[2] But in so far as it stimulated and ordered the affections towards one's true life, no subject for thought or study could be said to be outside the legitimate purview of the Franciscan mind: only it must always be approached with the immediate purpose of confirming or establishing the heart in its proper affections. Consequently they preferred the way of that spiritual perception which we might call heart-perception, to argumentative reasoning: it brought them more directly into touch with the spiritual *realities* of life.

The genuine Franciscan mind was always more or less impatient of dialectical processes. This is amusingly illustrated in a story told by Brother Giles, the rustic philosopher of the first Franciscan days. He was once present when a certain Gheradino was setting forth in approved scholastic style twelve reasons in defence of the proposition that a man can *do* nothing since of himself

[1] *Anal. Franc.*, III. p. 101. [2] Cf. II Celano, 194 *seq.*

he *is* nothing. At the end of the argument Giles replied. "Would you that I show clearly what a man can do?" he asked. Then mounting upon a box he dramatically interrogated an imaginary lost soul: "What wouldst thou do, poor hapless one, if time were given thee for repentance?" And making answer for the lost soul, he exclaimed: "All the world would I give to escape eternal damnation". Turning to Gheradino, Giles remarked: "Take heed, brother; a creature can do something".[1] One, perhaps, might expect this impatience in Giles who had not studied in the schools but was a simple though intelligent countryman. But one finds it, too, in St. Bonaventure, the cultured scholar. He, it is true, as a master in the schools, made use of the dialectical method; yet always as one restive at its delay and disappointed at its results. His very soul spoke when he said that the deepest wisdom comes, not by argument, logical reasoning or definition, but by holy examples, divine promises and devotion.[2]

Wisdom—the perception and understanding of right living—is perhaps the word which best expresses the direct objective of Franciscan thought. Always, however, we must remember that right living to the Franciscan, meant the conformity of oneself in mind and heart with the Poor Christ of Franciscan vision. Proper Franciscan thought, therefore, was the conscious mental apprehension of St. Francis's faith in the Poor Christ and of the world's life in its relation to the Christ he worshipped: and it was the love and worship of our Lord in the mystery of His earthly poverty which set in motion the intellectual activity of the pure Franciscan spirit questioning the heavens and earth in order that it might more fully understand the

[1] *Anal. Franc.*, III. 102–104.

[2] *Breviloquium*, prologus: *Opera Omnia* (Quaracchi), tom. v. p. 201.

Christ-life which held the meaning of all created life. Hence in the words of St. Francis, the goal of all knowledge was "to know Christ, the poor Man crucified".[1] Such, indeed, was the only desirable knowledge St. Francis would admit. Yet we must not forget that when the saint contemplated the crucifix, he mentally and affectively gathered the whole creation around the cross. In his vision of the poor Man Crucified it was as in a fourteenth-century *Crucifixion* or *Nativity*, where the Blessed Virgin and saints and the repentant sinner, the landscape and beasts and flowers, fill in the picture and point the lesson of the earth deriving its significance from the Christ and the love which emanates from the Christ. To St. Francis the crucifix was not merely the crucifix but the key to life's problem: the understanding of which is gained by that spiritual union with Christ which is wrought by love. Exactly the same principle guided and ruled the more speculative mind of St. Bonaventure and made him the acknowledged master-mind of speculative Franciscan thought. With him as with St. Francis there is no true knowledge of God and the world but such as comes from union of heart with Christ, and only as we know Jesus Christ, have we any real knowledge of aught else. Nor is knowledge of any value save it begin in the love of Christ and issue in greater love until "all our desires shall be fulfilled and we know the love which surpasseth knowledge".[2] In the same spirit in which St. Francis gazed upon the visible creation, seeking witnesses of the Christ, does St. Bonaventure scan the arts and sciences. They are nothing to him save as they help him to understand "the faith by which Christ dwells in our hearts": though, on the other hand, he is convinced that in all knowledge God makes Himself known to man

[1] II Celano, 105. [2] *Breviloquium, ut supra.*

provided that a man holds fast by the guiding light of Divine faith. Always, too, in St. Bonaventure as in St. Francis, the convincingness of his argument is in the felt sincerity of his spiritual experience and emotion ; he is the contemplative and seer athirst for the satisfying good of the heart far more than the logician. And in that he is at one with all that has been most invigorating and influential in all Franciscan thought, whether we consider it is the preaching of the friars or in the writings of their deeper thinkers, in their popular "representations" and "meditations" or in its contribution to more exact theology. And this accounts for the persistent thread of poetical imaginativeness and mystical allusion which runs through genuine Franciscan literature. Its thought is always akin to fervent poetry ; its speculation issues in a mystic glow. It shows a mind avid for vision which will set the heart aflame ; and with this vision it is intellectually content, intellectually but not morally : for thought must lead to action, and vision to affective and practical apprehension of the Good beheld.

Such, then, was that religious romanticism which is identified with Franciscan poverty and endows it with spiritual substance and moral value. In its main lines it has given a classic form to Christian romanticism for all times. Nowhere else outside the Gospels has the spirit of romance so purely uttered itself in the realization of the Christian faith as in early Franciscan story. That, indeed, is what invests St. Francis and his first followers with undying interest : that and nothing less.

ST. CLARE OF ASSISI

I

No one can read the story of St. Clare without confessing to a vivid human interest. It would be possible with a semblance of historical truth to construct out of her Legend a purely earthly romance with an immediate and compelling appeal to the human emotions. The story would be fundamentally false, but with a falsehood garbed in the vesture of truth ; yet the possibility proves that in St. Clare we have no figure " of theological lath and plaster," but a true woman of human quality confessed. And yet one must deliberately avert one's mental vision not to recognize that in this woman's life we have the fulfilment of something which is unknown to, or but vaguely felt in, the common experience of the world ; a something which puts her story upon a higher plane of spiritual thought and desire than the world is accustomed to. What that something higher is, only the Catholic faith—the faith by which Clare herself lived—can realize ; to those who have not this faith it must necessarily remain more or less a baffling mystery.

But one must be grossly lacking in spiritual perception not to recognize in the story of her life as it appears in Franciscan legend, the pure spirituality which was the atmosphere in which her mind and heart had their being. In her it is evident no ordinary earthliness found place, but all was consecrated by a purity staid with the constant vision and love of the heavenly life. She comes before us as one at all times " beautiful in the light of holiness ". There

is in her story no deviation from the spiritual law to remind us of her kinship with common wayward humanity: her gaze is ever upward and she walks consistently in the love of God. That much is palpably evident in the pages of her biography. One would not say that she was a stranger to temptation or that she never felt the weakness of the flesh in the upward striving of the spirit: but it is clear that evil of any sort never had any masterful hold of her. On the day that she "vowed" herself to the entire service of Jesus Christ, she brought to her dedication a virginal worship which she kept unsullied to the end.

And yet, as we have said, her saintship is the crown of a life of intensely human quality. But is not that blending of the divinely spiritual with the clearly human, one of the delights of early Franciscan story? As we have seen elsewhere, the peculiar significance of the Franciscan was that it brought the spirit of romantic chivalry into man's relations with his God: and the chivalric romance was nothing if not a conscious joy in human life. St. Francis consecrated the emotion and ideal of chivalry into veritable sacraments of the life in Christ.

It is in its exemplification of this fact that the story of St. Clare is of absorbing interest and piercing instruction. Clare lived in the vision of this religious chivalry: she drank in its truth and beauty with quick appreciation, and held to it with passionate loyalty. Not for her indeed were the knightly excursions and adventures which sent Francis and his friars traversing the world to proclaim the gospel of poverty, and rescue souls from evil ways. She was the lady of the house, conserving in her heart the true ideals which made these adventures spiritually glorious, and confirming with her sympathy and comfort the adventurers in the high path of honour in which they were called.

And so in some way we obtain from St. Clare a clear and more undistracted view of the inner life of the pure Franciscan spirit, than from even St. Francis himself, since even in him the external duties of the friar are apt somewhat to dim the vision of that interior life which was the innermost sanctuary and nursing ground of the Franciscan spirit.

The native lineaments of St. Clare's character are revealed in the very opening of her history. As she then appears we recognize at once the heroic lines upon which her life is to be moulded ; the soaring idealism of her temperament, the capacity for utter self-sacrifice, the need to worship and yet the impossibility of her worshipping at any common shrine. She is fearless in loyalty ; she might have been imperious but for the gentle humility which was born of her worshipping love of Jesus Christ.

Unlike Francis who was of the uprising merchant-class, Clare was of noble family : a fact which perhaps fitted her the better to bring to the Franciscan life of poverty a certain queenly dignity which was not without its influence in fostering the ideal conception of the Lady Poverty. Moreover, to her experience of life in the feudal paternal home, must undoubtedly be traced something of that virile strength of character which is so clearly evident in her life's story. For the house of an Italian lord at that period, was no quiet retreat removed from the stress of social and political life. It had much of the vigour of an armed camp, always alert for defence or aggression. And in such a household the weak might be overpowered and unnerved by the constant alertness ; but the strong would develop strength : and Clare was of the race of strong women, a daughter who would not shame her fighting progenitors. Nor was it only with political disturbance

and war that the feudal household were astir. In the homes of the feudal lords, the minstrels sang their songs and related their tales of adventure—those songs and tales which were redolent of the new spirit of the time. Her birth, and her father's house are things to be remembered in recalling the history of Clare.

From her earliest years Clare seems to have been possessed in a rare degree by the instinct for religion. She did not pass through a period when her heart was held by the illusion of finding her supreme desire in any secular achievement: from the beginning her heart was drawn to religion. This may have been due in part to the greater seclusion in which a girl was educated; in part, too, undoubtedly, it was owing to her mother's influence. For Ortolana, her mother, was a woman of unusual piety combined, it would seem, with an adventurous and fearless character, such as one finds in many of the feudal chatelaines of the period. She had gone on toilsome pilgrimages to the Holy Land and other distant parts, perhaps, in the wake of the crusading armies. When Clare was about to be born, the Lady Ortolana was praying in a church for a safe delivery, when she heard a voice saying in answer to her prayer: "Fear not, woman, for thou shalt in safety bring forth a light which shall clearly illumine the world". And because of that word, when the child was born she was named Clare, the "clear-shining". Such prenatal promises are not always realized; but Ortolana was a careful mother and wise; the Legend says she was worthy of her name, and educated her daughter in the knowledge and practices of the faith.[1]

[1] *Leg. S. Clarœ.* The mediaeval biographer could not resist the temptation to play upon the word Ortolana, which he takes in a Latin meaning, hortulana, a gardener. In like manner Alexander IV, in the bull of Clare's

So Clare began early to take thought for the poor; nor would she give to them merely from the common store. Her alms were consecrated by self-sacrifice; she sent secretly to orphaned children delicacies meant for herself. Also she early acquired a habit of prayer and would withdraw herself into secluded places to pray; and not having yet a chaplet of beads upon which to count her *Paters*—the chaplet may have been a gift in reserve for grown-up days—she collected little heaps of pebbles to serve the purpose. Such acts of piety are not always to be taken too seriously; they are often the tokens of that religious idealism which makes sweet the childhood of many children, but in after-life fades away before the allurement of worldly pleasures. But with Clare it would seem that the thought of religion already held the reins of her heart's true desire.

Quite evidently Clare grew up in purity and in innocence of the world; but it was the positive innocence of pure, soul-forming affections; the innocence of a heart which is alive with quickened desire, and alert to discern its own mystery. Clare had her dream of the future stimulating her to formative action and calling forth the instinctive loyalties of her nature and transmuting the ore of the earth into spiritual gold. Nor can we believe that she was uninfluenced by the romances of chivalry which were told in every feudal household. The romantic temperament was her own, and tales of high adventure and deathless loyalty would be sweet to her ears, but they would also be to her parables of the religious life in which her thoughts were set. Even if the romance literature was unknown to her, her heart would fashion its dreams upon the lines of the tales of chivalry, just because her temperament was

canonization, says: "The good Ortolana who in the garden of the Lord produced such a plant" (cf. Sbaralea, *Bullar. Franc.*, II. p. 82).

as that of the authors of the tales, and actual life as she knew it was in the fashion of chivalry. Her own pure nobleness would supply the exalting idealism. But as we have said, it is probable that she knew by ear the romance tales.

Now it was just the romantic temperament wedded to a heart wholly dominated by religious faith, which gave to the innocence of Clare its peculiar quality. It might be said of her—speaking with entire reverence—that had she remained in the world she would have made a more perfect wife than a perfect mother. Her most urgent need was to worship, and with her it was a compelling emotion ; in her worship she found her joy and life. But with this was combined a searching gaze for spiritual excellence and high achievement. She would never have held her lord back from the battle of life ; her high spirit would have bidden him go forth and fulfil the whole promise of his manhood. And yet in his effort and achievement he would have been comforted by that noble love which is twin-sister to the purest worship, the love which is without thought of self, because self-consciousness is realized only in the vision of that which is worshipped.

These were the emotions which entered into Clare's interior life ; but they were wings upon which her spirit soared beyond the heaven of ordinary mortal's desire. Not at any lesser altar but at the high altar of God Himself, her worship must needs expend itself in virginal adoration. With that instinctive assurance her womanhood came to her. And yet it was an assurance which at first was a troublous mystery. For to be free in our worship of God we must realize the Divine Being as the satisfaction of our own need ; He must come to us in some sort as ourselves, but as the infinite sublimation of ourselves ; only so can

we lose ourselves in Him with the happy consciousness of finding ourselves. This, indeed, is the problem all religious souls have to solve before they gain their spiritual freedom.

It was this unsolved problem which kept Clare from an ultimate decision until she met St. Francis. Then the mystery was solved in the twofold conviction that in the evangelical poverty he set forth she would find her soul's freedom, and that he himself was its true teacher both in his words and deeds. From that moment, Francis was, "under God, the Master of all her seeing," [1] and evangelical poverty her world of delight. And in that world over which Francis stood sentinel, God revealed Himself to her in a quickened understanding of the Christ-life of the Gospel. Then all her being was caught up into a threefold loyalty—which was really one: loyalty to Francis, Poverty, and the Lord Christ Who came to the world in poverty. And in that threefold loyalty Clare attained to the perfect life.

[1] Cf. Fr. Paschal Robinson, *The Life of St. Clare*, p. xxxvi.

II

CLARE'S devotion to St. Francis was undoubtedly the chief determining influence in her life. "She gave her heart to Francis, and he, in turn, consecrated it to God," says one of her biographers.[1] Francis was her guide and spiritual director: but he was more. He entered into her life as a living expression or embodiment of her own soul's aspiration and ideal. He himself was an actual likeness of that which alone she loved and desired; and in consequence she gave him something of that reverential affection and worship with which she yearned towards Jesus Christ in the mystery of His earthly poverty and lowliness. Francis was not altogether singular in thus sharing with our Divine Lord Clare's worshipful love: whoever and whatever gave testimony to the supreme Object of her worship was placed by her responsive spirit near to His throne;[2] but Francis was nearest and in some measure apart, because no other on the earth was to Clare so true a witness. And this explains how her attachment to St. Francis was at the same time personal and impersonal: impersonal, in that her worshipful thought went always beyond him to that of which his life spoke to her; yet personal because it was he who thus spoke, clearly and imperatively, of the Divine Goal of all her desire.

[1] Fr. Paschal Robinson, *The Life of St. Clare*, p. xxxvi.

[2] For instance she had a deep affection for Brothers Angelo, Leo, and Juniper, and for Agnes of Prague.

In later life Clare was accustomed to speak of herself as "plantula Beati Patris Francisci"—"the poor little plant of our Blessed Father Francis"; thus describing herself in her sweet humility and affection. But it is to be noticed that St. Francis always styled her "Sister Clare," and quite evidently not as a mere conventional style of address, but in all courtesy and special reverence. He had no playful appellation for her such as he had for the Lady Giacoma di Settisoli whom he was wont to call "Brother Giacoma". His reverence for Clare was of too intensive a quality; their spiritual kinship too intimate and sacred. For was he not in his own thought and in that of his contemporaries, the "bridesman" commissioned by the Divine Bridegroom to win her entire love for Him in His poverty, and to be her friend and guardian in a treacherous world? It was a relationship which called for the most delicate reserve, and yet for a familiar solicitude and companionship. To one less unworldly or less absorbed in his devotion to his Divine Master, the duty thus imposed upon him might have presented spiritual dangers: but the utter unworldliness and high spiritual characters of both Clare and Francis kept the world and its evil at bay. And so was rendered possible the "romance" of Clare's life,[1] which more than all the romances of chivalry tended to create a new ideal of the sanctity of womanhood in the world which knew Francis and Clare.

The story of how the two saints first met and how Clare at the persuasion of Francis left her father's house and vowed herself to Christ in poverty is told with a pleasing simplicity in the Legend.[2] It runs thus:—

[1] Cf. Fr. Paschal Robinson, op. cit., p. xiii.

[2] The *Legenda S. Clarœ*, written about the time of her canonization, has been published by the Bollandists and recently by Prof. Pennacchi of

"When she heard tell of the fame of Francis who like a new man was renewing with new virtues the way of perfection forgotten by the world, moved by the Father of Spirits, Clare at once desired much to see and hear him. And Francis, too, struck by the fair fame of this most favoured maiden, was no less wishful to see and speak with her: for wholly eager for spoils and being come to depopulate the world, he would fain snatch her from the wicked world and restore her a noble prey to her God. He visited her and she more often visited him; and they discreetly ordered their visits so that their visits should not become known by man nor be spoken ill of by public gossip. For she in her frequent visits to the man of God, taking one only companion who was a loyal friend, went by a secret way; and to her his words seemed a flame and his deeds beyond the deeds of man. And our Father Francis exhorted her to despise the world and with burning words made clear to her the barrenness of earthly hopes and the delusion of earthly beauty. Into her ears he instilled the sweet espousals of Jesus Christ, persuading her to keep the pearl of maidenly purity for that Blessed Spouse Who for us became Man. But what need of many words? Deftly doing the part of a faithful bridesman, Francis entreated, and the maiden did not delay to give consent. And from that moment the joy of Paradise began to open out to her, and in comparison the world seemed of little value; and her heart melted as it were with desire, and because of that joy she aspired to the heavenly nuptials. Thus aglow with divine fire, she so despised the glory of this world's vanity that the world's good opinion had no longer any power

Assisi. Three English translations have appeared: (1) By Fr. Marianus Fiege in *The Princess of Poverty*; (2) by Fr. Paschal Robinson, entitled *The Life of St. Clare*; (3) by Mrs. Balfour in *The Life and Legend of the Lady St. Clare.*

over her heart. But dreading the allurements of the flesh, she took a resolution never to know any earthly delight; and her desire was to make of her body a temple of God alone, and she strove so that by virtue she might be worthy to become the spouse of the great King. Thenceforth she put herself entirely under the guidance of Francis, deeming him after God the guide of all her steps. And from that time her soul leaned upon his holy counsels and with a waiting heart she received the words he spoke to her of the good Jesus."

Assuredly he who wrote the Legend was not unacquainted with the literature of romantic chivalry. In his mind's eye he sees the chosen knight wooing a bride for his liege-lord, not betraying his trust by a false word or unfaithful thought: and he evidently rejoices that one such has been found actually upon the earth. That some such mental picture was also in the mind of Francis is not improbable, accustomed as he was to express his service of our Lord in the language of chivalry. In later years he once spoke this parable in warning to the less discreet: "A mighty king," he said, "sent two messengers to the queen. The first came back and reported the queen's reply, with no further words. The second, after repeating the queen's words, spoke much in praise of her beauty. Whereupon the king recalled the first messenger and asked him his opinion of the queen. 'She listened in silence and spoke wisely,' was the reply. 'But saw you no beauty in her?' asked the king. 'Be it thine, my lord, to look upon that: mine it was to deliver the message.' At these words the king was greatly pleased and he took that messenger into his intimate service; but the other, because of his wanton eyes, he cast out of his house." [1]

[1] Cf. II Celano, 113.

The parable suggests the reverential purity which Francis brought to his wooing of Clare for the heavenly King; and it is redolent of the purest chivalry. And here it may be fitting to remark upon the extreme sensitiveness with which St. Francis guarded the purity of his relations with women: a sensitiveness partly accounted for by the moral laxity generally prevailing in the world of his day. He would seldom speak with any woman alone; and whenever it was necessary for him to speak with any, his words were few: nor would he look them in the face. Once discussing this matter with a companion, he said: "I tell thee, dear brother, there are two women only whose faces I should recognize if I looked at them. The face of such a one and such a one is known to me: but that of no other." [1]

It is generally supposed that those two women were St. Clare and the Lady Giacoma. They were both living when the chronicler penned these words; and that fact, perhaps, withheld him from mentioning their names. But the sensitive reserve with which St. Francis generally ordered his relations with women only throws into clearer relief the freedom of soul he found in his intercourse with St. Clare and invests that freedom with a shielded purity and unique sacredness. For it was against the world that he guarded his vowed loyalty to Christ; and Clare was not of the world but in mind and heart was wholly true to Christ and of one mind with Francis in the new life which had been given him. Doubtless, too, in the quick and intimate understanding of his vocation, which Clare swiftly revealed—or, in other words, in the manifest kinship of her spirit with his own—Francis recognized the spiritual security of their relationship, and saw a Divine sanction. For Clare was less a disciple of his than a co-disciple with

[1] Cf. II Celano, 112.

him of evangelical poverty itself ; so intuitively and swiftly did she fathom its meaning, and so completely from the outset did it fill all her thought and desire.

On the night that she fled from her father's house she was already a mistress of the Franciscan life, so entirely was she possessed by it and did she possess it. In the after days until her death she would drink yet deeper draughts of its wisdom ; but already she had gained the spring whence the wisdom flowed, and had gained it with a conscious assurance such as few ever attained to after much learning and experience. And that was the full justification of her flight from the shelter of her father's house into the material poverty and homelessness which awaited her. True, Francis was there to guide her and she knew he would provide the necessary shelter and sustenance ; but in the eyes of the world she was throwing herself into a state of beggary and alone of all women. Had she been less secure of her vocation, less a mistress of its significance, less possessed by its clear, revealing purpose, she might have been blamed for thus setting out alone upon a path untrodden by any woman. As it was, however, we must recognize in her flight an heroic insistence on the soul's freedom to " love the highest when we see it ".

Of this we may be certain, her family would never have consented to the step she had resolved on had she waited for their sanction, but would have used the large legal rights of a feudal house to prevent her. It was a case of taking by violence, if she would take at all.

For the story of her flight we will again turn to the Legend :

" When the solemnity of Palm Sunday was drawing near, Clare with great fervour went to the man of God, asking his counsel as to her leaving the world, and in what

manner and at what time it should be. And our Father Francis commanded that on that festive day Clare should array herself with ornaments and come to the blessing of the palms with all the people, and that on the night following she should go forth from the camp and her worldly joy be turned into mourning for our Lord's Passion. And on the Sunday the maiden went resplendent in her festive array amongst all the women and with them entered the church. There a remarkable foreshadowing happened: for when all the others pressed forward to take the palm branches, Clare in bashfulness stayed in her place, nor did she move from it. Wherefore the bishop came down from the steps and came to her and put a palm into her hand. The night following Clare set about to obey the command of the Saint, and with some trusty companions prepared to take her longed-for flight. But she wished not to go by the usual door; but with a strength at which she herself wondered she broke open another door which was barred with beams and stones. And thus she left behind her, home and city and kinsfolk and hastened to St. Mary of the Porziuncola, and there the brethren who were keeping vigil at the little altar, with lighted torches, received her. Then without any delay did she cast aside the defilements of Babylon and give a bill of divorce to the world; and she put away her ornaments and her hair was shorn by the hands of the brethren. . . . And when she had received the holy habit of penance before the altar of the Blessed Mary, and when the humble handmaid had been espoused to Christ as it were by the couch of His Virgin-Mother, straightway St. Francis led her to the church of St. Paul to abide there until the Most High should provide another place."

Two things strike one in reading this passage of the

Legend : the fearless courage with which Clare seized her soul's life, breaking down with her own hands the barriers, material and immaterial, which blocked her path ; and the equally fearless courage of Francis. There is little doubt that the Bishop of Assisi was aware of what was to happen ; for Francis was wont to consult him in his difficulties ;[1] and the bishop's action in coming down from the altar steps, and putting the palm-branch into Clare's hand as she remained unmoving in her place, lends colour to this supposition. Nevertheless, even in that age of daring individual action, Clare's flight was sure to arouse anger on the part of her relatives, and adverse criticism amongst her acquaintances, as was afterwards manifest. But neither Clare nor Francis quailed before the storm of indignation, in which the men-folk of her family pursued her to the convent of San Paolo on the morrow of her flight. Clare, clinging to the altar, proclaimed her dedication and vows : and after some days her relatives desisted from active persecution. Then Francis obtained for her a hospitable shelter with the nuns of Sant' Angelo in Panso, a convent on the slope of Monte Subasio, until finally he secured the church and house of San Damiano, which then became her life-long dwelling-place. Throughout Francis stood by her faithfully. Not only did he provide for her a house, but he charged himself to succour her at all times in her bodily and spiritual needs.[2]

On her side Clare placed in him an entire and simple trust : and what this trust meant to Clare as a spiritual asset in her life can be understood only when we remember her character. It was perhaps humanly speaking, the one thing needed to bring her character to its full bloom.

[1] Cf. *Leg.* 3 *Soc.*, 20, 35, 47.

[2] Cf. II Celano, 204 ; also Regula S. Claræ, cap. 6.

Without it her natural strength of mind might have developed into imperiousness or a harsh self-reliance ; the surgent loyalty which was at the root of her moral being would have been balked of its full exercise. Had that perfect trust been denied her, she would undoubtedly have suffered that imprisonment of loneliness, which to some souls—and these amongst the loftiest and most generous—is as the winter to a well-planted garden. It may be said, that in religion the most perfect trust will always be found in the trust the soul puts in God, and that the most loyal of creatures may never lack the fullest exercise of their loyalty when they look to Him. But it must not be forgotten that the greatest of saints know no such divorce between God and their fellow-creatures as this statement may be taken to imply, but their conscious relationship with God overflows yearningly towards those who are the companions of their earthly journey : and in some way the realization of their relationship with God in and through the creature is needful for their spiritual freedom. And none felt this more keenly than did the first Franciscans : it was a distinguishing note in their spiritual lives. If Clare had not found in St. Francis a fellow-creature in whom she could put a trust, only less absolute than that which God Himself invites, she would have lacked something in the realized Franciscan life of which she is so resplendent a type ; and that would not only have been our loss, but hers, too, whilst she remained on earth. It may equally be said that something would have been lacking in the Franciscan message to the world had St. Francis found no St. Clare upon whom to bestow in a singular degree that high chivalrous reverence for womanhood, so selfless and true, which belonged to the purest romance of chivalry though it was so seldom found in actual life.

As the years went by that companionship of the spirit which drew these two souls together, lost neither its unearthly purity nor its effective reality, but only deepened in spiritual intensity as they both drew nearer to the Divine life, and became a more active co-operation on the part of Clare as the need arose. Early in her religious life Clare, with prophetic vision, urged St. Francis to continue his apostolate of preaching at a time when he was doubting whether he ought not to give himself to a secluded life of prayer; and she seems indeed to have been his counsellor frequently in his troubles. To her he unburdened his soul as to few others; oftentimes revealing to her the dealings of God with him, of which he was reticent even with the friars. He is said to have told her the secret history of the Porziuncola Indulgence;[1] he certainly did not hide from her the miracle of the Stigmata;[2] into her sympathetic ears he poured out the thoughts which came to him concerning the proper vocation of the friars.[3] The discreet reticence of the early biographers of the saints has drawn a veil over their intercourse against idle curiosity; nevertheless certain illuminating facts shine like stars in the night of our knowledge, revealing much to those who can see. There is, for example, the somewhat disconcerting story of how in the time of his great trouble when many of the brethren were departing from the first ways of the Order, St. Francis gradually withdrew more and more from intercourse with the Sisters of San Damiano. It is quite evident that in this matter St. Clare was resolute to defend her spiritual birthright, and that she drew upon all the resources of her own

[1] Cf. Bartholi, *Tract. de Indulgentia* (ed. Sabatier), p. 96.

[2] Some of the bandages she made to staunch the bleeding of the wounds, and a pair of soft sandals to ease his pierced feet, are still preserved at Santa Chiara in Assisi.

[3] Cf. *Anal. Franc.*, III. p. 81.

gentle but determined spirit, to prevent St. Francis from altogether withdrawing his presence and the fostering care he owed herself and her Sisters. To this incident we shall have to refer again farther on in speaking of Clare's influence upon the development of the Franciscan Order. Here we but regard it as it affects her personal relations with St. Francis. Well she knew from her sympathetic intuition of St. Francis's spirit, that his decision was dictated merely by his fear lest his example might be taken as a sanction by those who were less unworldly in their views and purpose, and lest any scandal might arise which would mar the fair name of the Order. But Clare took a larger view. Francis's withdrawal would mean a practical separation of the Sisters from the Franciscan Order, and in some way it would cast a shame upon her and those women who were with her. Through the silences of those early biographies her protest rings clear and consistent: and in the end she won Francis to her own better judgment. Tradition has given us some indication of this, her one struggle with Francis himself, in the pages of the *Fioretti;* and what it tells us in nowise contradicts the more reticent testimony of Thomas of Celano.[1] In truth it might well have been some remonstrance from Clare which drew from St. Francis this protest of his fidelity to the trust she had reposed in him:—

"Think not, my brothers, that I do not love them [the Sisters at San Damiano] perfectly: for if it were wrong to cherish them in Christ, would it not have been a greater wrong to espouse them to Christ? Indeed it had been no wrong not to have called them, but not to care for them

[1] *Vide Fioretti*, cap. 14; II Celano, 204. Cf. also *Speculum Perfectionis*, cap. 108, where Clare from her sick-bed requests a meeting with St. Francis at the time that he too was sick unto death.

when called, were utter unkindness. But I am giving you an example, that as I do so you also should do. For I will not that any should take upon himself to visit them of his own accord ; but my will is that the unwilling and most reluctant men, so only that they are also spiritual and approved by a long and worthy life, shall be appointed for their service."[1]

In very truth Francis could say that he himself had not acted by his own will when he called Clare to the service of Christ, but by the compulsion of the Divine Will ; and in obedience to that Will he had charged himself with the care of her. That same rule—having regard to other circumstances—he now endeavoured to impose by precept and example upon the friars. Some such prudent regulation as that expressed by St. Francis, Clare herself would be the first to admit ; but at the same time she tenaciously held to her right and that of her Sisters to share with the Brethren the comfort and encouragement of Francis's personal care.

And perhaps Francis in his absorption in the work of his vocation and in his conviction of the noble strength of Clare's character, never quite realized the value to her of her conscious dependence upon him. He probably knew better the comfort she was to him ; nor is it unlikely, considering his entire self-immolation upon the cross of Christ, that one motive which led him to cease his frequent visits to San Damiano was to deny himself this comfort : for the path of the spirit in quest of sanctity, is pitiless in its exactions ; the saint must lose all before he finds all. But in the last two years of his earthly life St. Francis entered into a greater spiritual security and peace. That was after he had received the sacred stigmata : and in those last days he was in frequent correspondence with Clare.

[1] II Celano, 205.

The last time they met upon earth was when Francis was being taken to Rieti at the request of Cardinal Ugolino, in the hope that a physician at the Papal Court then resident at Rieti, might afford him some relief from his bodily suffering and prolong his life. As they were setting out Francis desired the Brethren first to take him to San Damiano that he might take leave of St. Clare. Arrived at the convent, he was unable for many days to proceed farther owing to his increasing weakness. So Clare had a cell of wattles made for him in the garden ; and it was during his stay there that Francis composed his " Canticle of Brother Sun ". Who shall say how much of the inspiration of that song of joyous worship came from the unfaltering faith and heavenly peace which filled the sacred enclosure in which Clare spent her life ?

To those who understand the influence of place upon a man's soul, the " Canticle of the Sun " will remain as much a tribute to the presence of St. Clare as to those earlier associations which bound the singer to the spot where he discovered his vocation : for Clare had kept alive there the spirit of those first days of his joy. When at length they were able to carry Francis onward to Rieti he took with him his regained gift of song ; and for Clare's comfort he composed " certain holy words with music," which he sent her by his companions.[1] The two saints never met again in their earthly life, for Francis when he returned to Assisi was dying ; and Clare, too, was so grievously ill that she thought she would die before him, without the comfort of his presence. And this to her was a great sorrow and the cause of bitter tears. True to herself, a few days before Francis's death, she sent word to him of her longing desire to see him once more ; " which when the saint heard," says

[1] Cf. *Speculum Perfectionis*, cap. 90 ; *Fioretti*, cap. 18.

the *Speculum Perfectionis*, "for as much as he loved her above all others with fatherly affection, he was moved with pity towards her. But considering that what she desired—namely, to see him—could not be brought about, for her comfort and that of all the Sisters, he wrote for her his blessing in a letter and absolved her from every defect, in case she had done anything contrary to his admonition or against the commandments and counsels of the Son of God. Moreover, that she might put aside all sadness and sorrow he said to the brother whom she had sent: 'Go and tell Sister Clare to put away all sadness and sorrow because she cannot see me now; since of a truth she may know that before her death both she and her Sisters will see me, and will be much comforted concerning me'."[1]

That promise was in some way fulfilled. On the following Sunday, when the body of the dead Francis was carried to San Damiano that Clare and the Sisters might pay their homage to it before the burial, Clare rose from her sick-bed and came and looked once more upon him who had been father and guide and friend, and kissed the hands which bore the marks of Christ's wounds. "When he was taken away," Celano says simply, "the door was shut which shall nevermore be opened to such woe."[2]

Clare out-lived Francis by twenty-seven years: lived, one might say, to defend and foster his work. She was constantly ailing, but her indomitable spirit would not consent to die till she had secured for all her Sisters the legal right to follow in the way that Francis had led herself. It was a trust Francis had left her, when from his deathbed he wrote to her:—

"I, poor little Brother Francis, wish to follow the life and poverty of Jesus Christ, our Lord Most High, and of

[1] *Speculum Perfectionis*, cap. 108. [2] I Celano, 117.

His most holy Mother, and to persevere therein until the end ; and I beseech you all, my Ladies, and counsel you always to live in this highest life and poverty. And watch yourselves well lest through the teaching or advice of anybody you ever depart from it in anywise."[1]

That legacy was in reality more to Clare than the bodily presence of Francis ever could have been ; in it he confided his spirit and life-work to her care. Clare, as we have said, would not consent to die then, not until she had fulfilled her duty of love as the inheritor of Francis's last will and desire. Twenty-seven years dragged out their course before her task was accomplished. On the 9th of August, 1253, Innocent IV solemnly confirmed the Rule which was the longed-for charter of the Franciscan life for Clare and all her Sisters. Two days later Clare died. Her work was accomplished ; she had done her part to secure the fulfilment of Francis's will.

Theirs was indeed a friendship—and more than a friendship in the common use of the word—such as the world can but seldom see, but should never forget : a glimpse surely of the heavenly life of which the world's life at its best is but a type. As such we may regard it for our own good.

[1] Cf. Regula S. Claræ, cap. 6.

III

With the death of St. Francis, Clare's life entered on a new phase, and she was now cast more upon her own individual strength of character and her own judgment. Whilst St. Francis lived her personality had thriven in her willing dependence upon him. It was indeed the dependence of a mind and heart having in itself a singular reserve of clear judgment and the power to act, but confessing in another the possession of the truth to which itself aspired. In her humility she was only conscious of what she received from St. Francis in the way of spiritual enlightenment and encouragement, and during the fourteen years from the time she had put herself under his guidance until his death, her chief thought had been to learn from his words and deeds the wisdom of the life he had opened out to her. He was her "mirror of perfection," and she was happily content to spend herself in worship of the Divine perfection which was revealed to her through him. At times she had indeed to bring her own clear intuitions to the aid of his troubled vision; at other times her buoyant faith in his mission had to uplift him when he was suffering and despondent; but he was always the anchor at which she rode in conscious security. After his death, when she stood as it were to be the witness to his mind and intentions against many who did not rightly understand him or were deliberately resolved to alter his work, a new factor came into the flow of her life, calling for a greater individual

initiative and activity. But she who in her eighteenth year could take her destiny into her hands with calm decision and fearless courage, was not one to quail before the responsibility which now devolved upon her. Besides her loyalty to St. Francis she had her own unmeasured faith in the wisdom of his teaching, to sustain her. That faith was to her no dark mystery, but a clear light in which all her being had found its sanctification and leading to God. With her, as with St. Francis, evangelical poverty had become in very truth the form of her soul; no mere discipline of inordinate desire but a vision and joy of life, deepening and expanding as the days went by; and to it her soul held fast from the time she found her vocation, with the tenacity of a woman clinging to a cherished conviction and of a saint clinging to the possession of God.

Moreover, as it was to St. Francis, so also to St. Clare, the life of evangelical poverty was embraced not merely as a personal joy but as a cause to be made known and established in the Church. The loyalty it demanded from them was not merely the loyalty which binds one to one's own friend or family or individual possession, but it was the loyalty which sweeps across the world with its vision, and hungers for an acknowledged sovereignty for the object of its worship: in a word, the loyalty of the apostle. It was because she possessed this larger loyalty that Clare is rightly styled in the *Speculum Perfectionis*, "the chiefest rival of St. Francis in the observance of evangelical perfection"[1]: the phrase, "evangelical perfection," always signifying in the early Franciscan writers the perfection of the gospel-life as taught by St. Francis. For the same reason the author of her Legend places her beside "the leaders of the march, the masters of life," who brought

[1] Cf. *Spec. Perfect.*, cap. 108.

about that "they who walk in darkness might see the light".[1]

Immediately and of direct purpose, Clare's apostolate was to open to women the high road of that religious life which she worshipped in St. Francis and his friars. No sooner indeed had she taken her vows than she set her heart upon sharing her own privilege with others of her own sex. And first she prayed God to inspire her favourite sister Agnes with the desire for holy poverty. At the end of a fortnight Agnes joined her, though not without trouble from her family.[2] Three years later we find Clare at the head of a religious community recognized by the ecclesiastical authorities and she herself forced by obedience to accept the office and title of abbess. It is one of the disappointments of Franciscan history that we have the most meagre records of the development of the community at San Damiano, the little church and convent which in 1213 or 1214 became St. Clare's dwelling-place. By 1216 several established convents of nuns had followed Clare's example and adopted her rule of poverty. Jacques de Vitry who wrote a letter that same year setting forth his observations of the Franciscan movement says: "The women live in divers hospices; they receive nothing but live by the labour of their hands"; the probable meaning of which is that they refused revenues and the sort of gifts usually accepted by religious for the maintenance of their convents. It cannot mean that they did not receive alms; for the receiving of alms was an integral element in the rule of St. Francis from the very beginning: only the alms to be

[1] *Leg. S. Clarœ*, prologus.

[2] The pathetic story of Agnes's flight from her home and of the cruel endeavour of her relatives to bring her back is told in the Legend. See also *Analecta Franciscana*, III. p. 173 *seq.*

received was such as would merely provide for immediate necessity. Jacques de Vitry, however, makes it clear that the Poor Clares worked with their hands and thus at least partly supported themselves :[1] and this was quite in keeping with the rule of the friars. That St. Clare and her community did observe Franciscan poverty is certain, since about the time her community was legally constituted, she obtained from Pope Innocent III the "Privilege of Poverty" which was a formal permission to live without property or revenues. We are left to mere conjecture as to how far St. Clare aspired to fashion her external life upon that of the friars. The office of preaching was certainly closed to her : we are not so certain that in the first days she did not minister to the sick-poor. In later days St. Francis sent the sick and suffering to her, but then it was for spiritual comfort and for the assistance of her prayers. Yet it is not improbable that even then San Damiano regularly shared with the outside poor such alms as the community received. We know that this was the custom at another convent of Poor Clares over which Blessed Agnes of Prague presided ; and she was a fervent imitator of the life lived at San Damiano.[2] But whether or no Clare did in the beginning exercise offices of piety outside her own convent, it is certain that she did not consider such external activity as essential to her vocation, else would she never have come to relinquish it, but in that persistent way which finally secured for her followers the rule of poverty, would have gained for them this liberty also.

Clare, however, did not regard the Franciscan vocation as essentially contemplative in the ecclesiastical sense of

[1] Cf. *The Life and Legend of the Lady Saint Clare*, Introduction, pp. 13–14.

[2] See *Vita B. Agnetis Bohem*, in *Acta SS. Martii*, tom. VII. p. 519 *et seq.*

the word. She herself urged St. Francis to go out and preach to the people at a moment when he was in doubt; and given other circumstances than those of her own time, it is possible she would have sent the Sisters to take part in the missionary enterprises[1] of the friars. But her special concern was to maintain pure and intact the fundamental liberty of "poverty with Christ". This under all circumstances she held to be the one essential thing; and it may be that when the rule of enclosure was imposed upon her community she accepted it the more willingly since, in their exclusion from active life in the world, their thought and desire would be concentrated more securely upon this essential good, and so they might guard more jealously the sacred fire whence the preaching and missionary activity of the friars must draw its ardour and power to subdue. In this way the Sisters would contribute to the external apostolate of the Order, even as, in the words of St. Francis, the prayers of a lay brother in a hermitage would convert the hearts of those listening to a preacher in the market-place. For Clare never regarded the friars and the Sisters but as co-partners in the Franciscan apostolate. Together they formed, in her mind, one spiritual family or people, co-operating in the maintenance and spread of the kingdom of evangelical poverty. And so when the legislation of Cardinal Ugolino and the attitude of some of the friars tended to bring about the separation of the Sisters into an Order altogether distinct from the Order of the Friars, she strenuously contended against the separation as injurious to the Franciscan ideal.

The story of her long contention for the liberty of Fran-

[1] Wadding (*Annales*, ad an. 1220) says that St. Clare on hearing of the martyrdom of the first martyrs in Morocco asked leave to join the mission to the infidels.

ciscan poverty and unity with the Order of Friars Minor, is an inspiring page in the history of Catholic womanhood ;[1] and it is the more pathetic because St. Francis either did not altogether enter into her own large view, or under pressure either of circumstance or sickness felt himself unable to contend with her for it. So far as she herself and her community at San Damiano were concerned, he supported her manfully and loyally in preserving the privilege of poverty and their dependence upon the Friars ; but he seems to have consented to the other communities of Poor Clares falling under another rule and another jurisdiction. There was in fact this difficulty in regard to most, if not all, of these communities. With the exception of San Damiano, the earlier Poor Clare convents had originally been communities of the more ancient Orders, which under the influence of Franciscan teaching had adopted a stricter rule of poverty, or else they were foundations made by Cardinal Ugolino with a view to a reform based on his own constitutions.[2] The Cardinal drew upon San Damiano for Sisters to initiate his reform : but St. Francis may have felt that he and the Friars were not primarily responsible

[1] Cf. *The Life and Legend of the Lady Saint Clare*, Introduction, pp. 11–31.

[2] *Ibid.* The Constitutions of Cardinal Ugolino were published in 1219 and, it would seem, after St. Francis had gone to the East. But it is not unlikely that the Cardinal had already informed the Saint of his intentions. Wadding (*Annales*, ad an. 1219) says St. Francis before setting out for the East had renounced all jurisdiction over the Poor Clares, except those of San Damiano. Wadding, however, is frequently inaccurate, especially in his dates. The probability is that the Cardinal claimed jurisdiction in virtue of a faculty granted him by Honorius III in 1218 and confirmed in 1219, empowering him to reform and establish convents, and that he recognized the jurisdiction of St. Francis over San Damiano, only as a special concession. Cf. bulls *Litteræ tuæ*, of 7 Aug., 1218, and *Sacrosancta Romana Ecclesia*, of 9 Dec., 1219 (Sbaralea, *Bull. Franc.*, I. pp. 1, 3–5) : also bull *Angelis gaudium* of 11 May, 1238 (*ibid.*, p. 242).

for such communities, and where he did not feel that the responsibility was put upon him by God, he would never take responsibility of his own will. But the spirit of Clare was never reconciled to the closing of the Franciscan life against those communities which desired to follow the Franciscan Rule. During St. Francis's lifetime she seems to have submitted her own judgment to his ruling and to have acquiesced in his renunciation of jurisdiction of these communities. But after his death when the duty of defending the liberty of her Sisters fell more directly upon her, she met the situation in a more militant spirit. Undoubtedly she felt that she was interpreting rightly the true mind of St. Francis, and that she was loyal to his own prudence or humility in the past in now asserting more boldly the right of her Sisters in the spirit to inclusion in the Franciscan family: and we may trust her judgment in this matter since no other knew him so well as she, nor was more loyal to his memory. Always to the end of her days her final argument would be: "Such was the teaching of our Father St. Francis"; or "So our Father St. Francis would have us do". And she was certainly true to his spirit in that no trace of rebellious defiance ever entered into her relations with the ecclesiastical authorities. She gained her purpose by the same weapon as St. Francis won the liberty to preach from the Bishop of Imola, namely, by a persistence of faith in humility. Celano relates in his *Vita Secunda* how St. Francis came to the city of Imola, and according to his custom presented himself before the bishop and asked his permission to preach. The bishop replied that he himself could do all the preaching his people required. The saint "bowed his head and humbly went out, but after a short time came back again. The bishop said: 'What dost thou want, brother? what art thou seeking

now ? ' and blessed Francis replied : ' My lord, when a father has driven a son out by one door he must come in again by another '. The bishop, won by this humility, with a pleasant countenance embraced him, saying : ' Thee and all thy brethren may for the future take my general permission to preach in my diocese, for this thy holy humility has earned the privilege '."[1] In the same spirit did Clare persist in her request that her Sisters should be allowed to live in poverty and under the direction of the friars : and gradually, though with wearisome delays, the permission was won and was granted by the Pope " with a pleasant countenance ". Her argument with Gregory IX (he who had been Cardinal Ugolino) in 1228 is typical in its character and result. The Pope had come to Assisi to canonize St. Francis, and in visiting St. Clare he again broached the question of poverty. It seemed to him too great a hardship that women, especially those of gentle birth and delicate upbringing in the world, should have to rely upon precarious alms and sometimes be short of the very necessaries of life, as indeed happened at times to the Sisters at San Damiano. It was not that he disvalued the heroism of their poverty which touched him at once with admiration and pity ; but in his pity for their hard life he wished to make some small but stable provision for them and himself offered to give them an endowment. And lest Clare might be scrupulous on account of her vow, he declared himself ready to dispense her from it so far as to allow her to accept his gift. Clare replied : " Holy Father, never shall I be willing to be absolved from following Jesus Christ ". What further took place in the interview we can only learn from a letter the Pope addressed to her and her community two months later, in which he formally con-

[1] II Celano, 147.

firmed unto them the "Privilege of Poverty" previously granted by Pope Innocent III.[1] In this letter, after deducing the Gospel arguments for evangelical poverty, which in all likelihood he had listened to from the lips of Clare herself —so true are they to the voice which speaks in her own letters—the Pontiff concludes: "As you have besought, we confirm by our apostolic favour your vow of most high poverty, and by the authority of these presents, grant that by nobody can you be compelled to receive possessions". Still this was only a concession to the community of San Damiano; yet it was a notable point gained; like the securing of the capital of an invaded country. Not long afterwards the same concession was made by the Pope to the Poor Clares of Montecelli near Florence, of which community Clare's sister, Agnes, was the abbess.[2] But Gregory IX insisted upon the observance of his Constitutions, which imposed the holding of property, so far as other communities were concerned.[3] Meanwhile, however, under the guiding influence of St. Clare, the Franciscan spirit and character were fostered, with more or less intensity, in the communities which looked to San Damiano as their

[1] This letter is preserved in the Convent of Santa Chiara at Assisi. Cf. Sbaralea, *Bull. Franc.*, I. p. 771.

[2] This is evident from the letter of Agnes given in *Chronica XXIV Generalium, Anal. Franc.*, III. p. 176.

[3] Cf. Sbaralea, *Bull. Franc.*, I. pp. 47, 73, 124, 125, 127, 207, 242. Concerning this matter of the Rule of the Poor Clares see my "Introduction" to Mrs. Balfour's *The Life and Legend of the Lady St. Clare*. Cf. F. Livaris Oliger: *De origine regularum Ord. S. Clarœ* in *Arch. Franc. Hist.*, v. fasc. 2–3; Pennacchi, *Leg. S. Clarœ*, Brevi Note Storiche, p. xlv. *seq.* Father Oliger contends that none of the earlier communities of Poor Clares received property in the beginning, but that experience quickly led Card. Ugolino to insist on small revenues. Honorius III, in his letter to Cardinal Ugolino, *Litterœ tuœ*, August 27, 1218, had declared that the houses and lands of the reformed communities should be vested in the Holy See.

mother-house. The reward of her courage came to her when her own Rule, based upon that of the Friars Minor, was solemnly approved by the Holy See on the eve of her death, and the right of all Poor Clares to live in Franciscan poverty and to be united with the friars under the same higher superiors was definitely recognized and proclaimed.

It would be difficult to overestimate the influence of that long struggle of thirty-four years upon the character and history of the whole Franciscan Order. During all that time there was a strong tendency at work to change the original conception of the Order, to "denationalize" its character, if the word might be used in an ecclesiastical sense. A large section of the friars had fallen under the glamour of the older monastic institutes, or were attracted to the Dominican ideal of an Order of Preachers; and so far they were out of sympathy with the primitive Franciscan ideal. In two principal directions did this tendency operate to the changing of the original character of the Order: in regard to poverty and in regard to the interdependence of the three Franciscan Orders of friars, nuns and tertiaries. In the first Franciscan days, the sense of the unity of their vocation and of the fraternal relationship created by it had been a strong link binding this threefold family together. All Franciscans of whatever degree were one family or people set apart from all others but united amongst themselves in the following of the poor and humble life of Our Lord upon earth; and their dependence upon the higher superiors of the friars was the outward symbol and safeguard of this spiritual unity. When one considers how the Poor Clares and the tertiaries[1] and also

[1] On the efforts made to separate the tertiaries from the jurisdiction of the Friars, *vide* P. Mandonnet, O.P., *Les Règles et le Gouvernement de l'Ordo de Pœnitentia*, pp. 196 and 222. Eventually the tertiaries were

the friars, who clung to the primitive life and poverty of the fraternity, cherished this unity of the Franciscan family, and how the endeavour to cast off the direction of the Poor Clares and the tertiaries came from those friars who in other ways departed from the simplicity of the primitive observance of poverty, the feeling grows that there must have been some fundamental link between the sense of fraternal kinship and the simple poverty of the early Franciscans; and that the two ideas were intimately woven together in the pure Franciscan ideal. The truth of the matter is that the original purpose of the Franciscan movement was to gather together all sorts and conditions of Catholic people in the faith and worship of evangelical poverty. Some would be called "to leave all things and follow" Christ, others living in the world would yet be not of the world. But for all, the Franciscan vocation meant the gazing upon the vision of Jesus Christ in His earthly poverty and the endeavour to conform themselves to the vision they held. It was a vocation marked at once by simplicity and universality: no proper condition of earthly circumstance need keep one from it: it required only the call of faith in its teaching. The tendency which made against both the original poverty and union of this world-wide fraternity was a narrowing tendency. It had its eye at once upon the seclusion of the monastic cloister and the exclusion of the camp: it would make of the friars monk-soldiers of the militant Church rather than the leaders in a more civic revival of Catholic life. That this tendency did not altogether succeed to the complete subversion of the true Franciscan idea is due in large measure to St. Clare.

finally placed under Franciscan Visitors by Nicholas IV in 1290 (Bull *Unigenitus*, in Sbaralea, *Bull. Franc.*, IV. p. 167). Concerning the dependence of the Poor Clares upon the First Order, cf. Sbaralea, op. cit.

IV

But were we to end here, this picture of Clare, "the chiefest rival of St. Francis in evangelical perfection," which we are attempting to set forth, were not only inadequate in its depth of understanding—as it must be—but even in its portrayal of the broad outline of her spirit. After all, her love of St. Francis and of poverty are incidents in that yet greater, more fundamental love with which she worshipped the Divine Spouse to Whom Francis had wedded her. And it is in her conception of "the Lord Christ" and of the worship with which she sought to draw near to Him, that we shall find the key to that Franciscan freedom of spirit, of which Clare is the resplendent exemplar.

Father Faber, in *All for Jesus*,[1] has contrasted the "beautiful liberty of spirit which pervades and possesses" the Benedictine mind, with the "regimental sort of holiness"; and he tells us that the way to "real, unaffected, enduring piety" is to be found in that Catholic liberty of spirit which modern writers on the spiritual life for the most part are wanting in. Doubtless there are times when the "regimental sort of holiness" is the only sort which will avail. But, as Father Faber remarks, it is apt, when it becomes a system, "to lessen devotion in extent," and, still more, "to lower it in degree". Liberty of spirit is the mark of true Catholic piety. Without it devotion is a mere

[1] Chap. VIII., sects. 7 and 8.

artificial growth ; it is not the giving to God of the man himself. It was just this giving to God of the real self which the Benedictine writers, to whom Father Faber alludes,[1] insisted upon ; and for this reason the piety they teach, whilst it fixes the whole mind and affections upon God, and lifts a man above his natural self, yet never destroys the personal self but only elevates it. Much the same thing is found amongst the early Franciscans. They develop in the sphere of their vocation as a plant rooted in its proper soil and flourishing hardily and joyously amidst the breezes of heaven. Certainly in their freedom of spirit those early Franciscans, such as we read of in the *Fioretti*, bear the mark of true Catholics. But, as we have said, none of them exhibit this mark more exquisitely than does St. Clare. Of her it may be said, without reservation, that even in this life she truly found herself in her religion, and in its sublimities moved " with household motions light and free ".

The secret of her spiritual freedom lies in the simplicity with which she trusted herself to the guidance of that worshipful love which was the encompassing form of her character, to bring her to the Divine goal of her heart's desire. Undoubtedly, her life-long purity and singleness of aim secured to her a fuller measure of freedom ; for to the innocent spiritual liberty comes as a childhood's confidant. But liberty itself is found in the possession of " the highest as we see it," or rather, " as the heart calls to it ". They who find their true desire are free. What then was the true desire which gave such exquisite freedom to

[1] It should be noted, however, that Fr. Faber is alluding to the Benedictine writers of the later Middle Ages. Still liberty of spirit is undoubtedly inherent in the Benedictine Order and accounts for its intimate hold on the Catholic mind from its first foundation.

Clare ? We may say at once that it was " the Poor Christ " of Francis's vision.

Her own soul was not more real to her than was the Lord of her supreme love, and in this Faith she gave Him the worship which her heart was restless to give to the One Who was the satisfying personal response to the call of her spirit. " Christ the Poor " came to her as this personal response, and her heart found its freedom and rest. From that moment her prayer was " to be conformed to Christ the Poor in the little nest of poverty " ; and jealous lest she might in aught be displeasing to Him, she made the remembrance of His poverty " as a clasp of gold with which she closed her heart in her breast, so that no dust of earth might find entrance ". Here, as in all the passages which tell of Clare and " the Poor Christ," the Legend falls into the language of the love-story : a fitting setting for the real story of Clare.

This story cannot be understood unless we bear in mind the romantic background of the Franciscan movement. In the eyes of Clare, Jesus Christ in His poverty was the mirror of knightliness. It was not merely because He was poor on earth that she worshipped Him, but because His poverty was resplendent with that special perfection in which the chivalrous soul delighted.

From the purely natural point of view, the most real thing in Clare's experience was the worshipfulness of that high valour, gentleness, pure love, and vast pity which were the spiritual notes of the chivalric ideal ; and it was as the supreme Exemplar of these knightly qualities that Our Lord revealed Himself to her as she listened to the illuminating words of St. Francis when he was wooing her for Christ. And then she knew herself His worshipper in the most intimate conviction of her heart. The knowledge

was clear and undoubting. It was the faith which unites in indissoluble union: the espousal faith of wedded souls. In that worship her womanhood was spiritually realized and all the desire of her heart satisfied. For she was a true woman of the romantic spirit, with whom to live meant to love worshipfully, but whose love could be given only to high and noble valour. But Jesus Christ in His poor life on earth was the very God of all knightly perfection; in His poverty and suffering, assumed only by the compulsion of love and pity, He manifested the noblest hardiness and gained the completest victory over the powers of the earth; in His poverty and suffering, He was most courteous, since He made Himself the servant and brother even of the least amongst men; and He was the most generous, whether as Creator or Redeemer, yet still more as Redeemer since He gave His very life for men. And yet all the heavens and earth were His: He was noble in possession even as in action.

Thus did Clare behold Him with her mind and heart; and the vision became her great joy: and when through St. Francis the Poor Christ demanded her perfect love, her heart leaped gratefully at the call, and in all the humility of a great love, she gave herself to share His life of poverty as a bride at her husband's side.

There is nothing more beautiful in the utterances of St. Clare than the simple confession of her joy in this spiritual espousal. Artlessly and often unconsciously this joy utters itself in the letters she wrote to Blessed Agnes of Prague, and became their dominant note.[1] These letters, too few though they are, give us a more intimate revelation of Clare's inner life than does anything else. One must

[1] *Vide* Mrs. Balfour: *The Life and Legend of the Lady St. Clare*, pp. 138–154. The Latin text is published in *Acta SS. Martii*, I. pp. 505–509.

read them through, adequately to gather the charm of their perfect sincerity. But from what we have said above we shall be able the better to understand that sincerity: as when she advances this argument for the worship of our Lord: "His strength is greater than all power; His grace more gracious, His countenance more fair than all others. His love stands alone, exceeding all joys." Or again this passage from another letter: "Like a poor virgin take to your heart the Poor Christ. Look upon Him made full of contempt for your sake, and follow Him. Make yourself full of contempt in this world for His sake. Look, most noble Queen, upon your Spouse and see how He was lovely beyond the sons of men and yet became unlovely amongst men for your salvation. His body was torn by scourges and He died in dire torments upon the Cross. Burn with a great longing to liken yourself to Him. If you endure pain now you shall enjoy glory: if you share His sorrow you shall share His joy." The same thought appears in another letter: "Every day look into this Mirror, O Queen, Spouse of Jesus Christ, and often contemplate your countenance therein that within and without you may adorn yourself with the virtues of diverse flowers and clothe yourself with the garments meet for the daughter and spouse of the King most high. O best beloved, it will be seemly in you with grace divine to delight in gazing into such a Mirror. Draw near and look therein, first at Jesus lying in a manger in all poverty and swathed in poor clothes. O marvel of humility, O marvel of poverty! The King of Angels, the Lord of heaven and earth, is laid upon a manger! Within your Mirror look upon the most joyful poverty of holy humility. For love of it He bore much hardship to redeem the human race. Then look therein upon the ineffable love whereby He willed to suffer on the wood of the Cross and even to

undergo a shameful death upon it. Your Mirror, fixed on the wood of the Cross, reproaches those who pass by, saying : ' O all ye that pass by the way, attend and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow '. Let us join our heart and our voice in answer to Him as He makes His plaint, and say : ' I will be mindful of Thee and remember, and my soul shall languish within me '."

Always there is this clinging of the thought to the " hardiness " of the Christ-life, supported by love and eventually crowned with glory—the veritable ideal of chivalric valour : and with it the response of the woman's heart. " O sweet Poverty," she cries out, " embraced by Jesus Christ with a perfect love ! " By constant gazing into the Divine Mirror she bids her correspondent to become " transformed into an image of His Deity " ; and " then," she continues, " you shall feel what His friends feel and shall taste the secrets of the joy which the Almighty God keeps in hiding from the beginning for His chosen ones though they dwell in this deceitful world ". But the spouse must aim constantly at perfection " lest His eyes see aught in you that is not perfect ". Nor is she content merely to worship : she aspires to share with her Lord in His redeeming work. In her humility she confesses that in this she herself is wanting, but she rejoices that another, namely the Blessed Agnes to whom she confides her thoughts, is found worthy to " supply my defect " and to be " the helpmate of God Himself and the support and encouragement of the frail members of His ineffable body ". That confession of her own defect was the cry of her sweet unconsciousness of her own merit : at the same time it voiced the need of her loyalty to be an active support to the Poor Christ in His earthly mission : and truly Clare was that.

But the letters reveal to us a further trait of her inner

life—her passionate love of beauty; and this love of beauty in the freedom of her soul is wedded to her love of the poor Christ. Jesus Christ Himself, in her vision of Him, is the Strong, the Gracious, the supremely Fair. But as she looks with His eyes upon the world, she finds beauty there too and quite simply delights in it. She seems in her worship like one who gathers flowers on a ramble through the lanes and woods, because they speak to her of the joy of her heart. Light and colour irresistibly attract her: they are respectively the glory of the heavens and of the earth: symbolically they are, as Clare takes them, the glory of the Divine Beloved and His faithful spouse. So, the heavenly King "sits in great glory upon His starry throne"; "the sun and the moon worship His glory"; "He dwells in the brightness of the saints". Again life with Him is encompassed with light: "the glorious vision [of this life with Him] is a splendour of glory, a brightness of eternal light, a mirror without spot". The very ecstasy of light enters into her joy of her Lord. Not unlikely it came to her from beholding the wonderful light which gives to her native Umbria its glorious mystic loveliness. But if her joy in light enters into her vision of Christ the heavenly King, her joy in colour has free play in her conception of His faithful worshipper. The soul which loves Him must "adorn herself within and without, with the virtues of diverse flowers," an illuminating phrase which bespeaks the meditative care with which Clare cultivated her small flower garden within the enclosure of San Damiano. Tradition says that amongst all flowers she loved more the violet, the rose, and the lily, because they seemed to her the flowers of humility, love, and purity. Nor did her poverty forbid her a mental appreciation of the beauty of less simple adornments. "He will adorn your

breast with precious stones," she writes to Blessed Agnes of Prague, "and your ears with jewels of great price and will set you around with topazes and crown you with a golden crown." Nor does the spiritual significance with which she alludes to these precious things detract from the natural pleasure she finds in them. In truth a certain mental and spiritual splendour—an adumbration of Nature's own splendour—is manifest in this daughter of most high poverty who put on her festive robes and ornaments for her last appearance amongst the members of her father's household, and subsequently made her life of poverty brilliant with her joy in earth and sky. And it was not only for the immediate beauty of Nature that she had a true feeling. On a Christmas night when she was experiencing a sense of loneliness, because her sickness would not allow her to join her Sisters in the Christmas ceremonies, she prayed to her Lord to comfort her, and thereupon was permitted to hear "the wonderful music that was being sung in the Church of San Francesco . . . the harmonies of the singers and the sound of the organ". She saw, too, "the manger of the Lord"—the crib the friars had fashioned in the church. And the music and the sight of the crib brought her a perfect peace. And then, too, there was her delight in hearing "a learned discourse". "For though she knew how to extract profit from the sermon of any speaker," says the Legend, "yet she listened with more relish when the shell of the words befitted the kernel of doctrine".

One ceases to wonder at Clare's tenacious clinging to the life of Franciscan poverty when one realizes the fullness and freedom of spiritual life with which it encompassed her. It taught her to find Christ Himself by way of those same essential emotions and ideals which were making the

world of her time throb with a new sense of life and self-realization. No troubadour felt so intimately, because so divinely, as she the joys of love and valour and beauty. She, too, had the poet's possession of the earth, but exalted by her faith in the Incarnate Word as the Lord of the earth. In her vision, as in that of St. Francis, this gave to all creation a sacramental value, so that it radiated reflexly the glory of Christ Himself, and as the lover in the minstrel's song found new values in the earth because of the existence of the beloved, so did the spirit of Clare find new values there because of the presence of Christ. In that faith Francis composed and sang his "Canticle of Brother Sun" on his last visit to St. Clare. That canticle struck a new note in mediaeval piety: it brought all the creatures to share with man his service of the Lord; no longer were they mere distractions to the God-seeking soul. But Francis and Clare had lived their lives, since they embraced holy poverty, in the faith of that song.

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Clare's death was in marvellous keeping with her life. She had, you will remember, just achieved her defence of poverty and won for her Sisters their Franciscan heritage after twenty-seven years of patient struggle: and now her long warfare was over. Around her bed were gathered some of the still surviving companions of St. Francis. There was Brother Angelo, courteous as ever, "comforting the rest in their sorrow," though he himself could not restrain his tears. Brother Leo from time to time kissed the bed upon which the saint lay. There, too, was Brother Juniper. On his arrival Clare looked up smilingly, greeting her "dear jester of the Lord," and asked him if he had anything new at hand concerning our Lord. Brother

Rinaldo, all kindness, thought to encourage Clare to patience in her suffering. She answered him: "Dearest brother, ever since that I knew the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, through His servant Francis, no suffering has troubled me; no penance has been too hard; no illness arduous". At the bedside was Agnes, Clare's sister, who had hastened from Florence at the news of Clare's illness, and was seeking by prayer to ward off the death which would mean further separation from the sister she passionately loved. But Clare bade her cease weeping, for that Agnes would soon follow her. And in fact Agnes died three months afterwards. Pope Innocent had come and at her request had given Clare the last absolution: though he said he himself needed absolution more than she.

As the last moments drew nigh, Clare asked the friars to read aloud the Passion of our Lord. After that she was heard to murmur softly: "Go forth without fear: for thou hast a good guide for thy journey. Go forth, for He Who created thee, hath sanctified thee; and protecting thee always, loveth thee with a love tender as that of a mother for her son. Blessed be Thou, Lord, Who has created me." One of the Sisters asked to whom she was speaking. Clare replied: "I am speaking to my blessed soul". Awhile after she turned to one of the Sisters and asked: "O daughter, dost thou see the King of Glory Whom I behold?" At that moment another Sister, looking towards the door, saw as with her bodily eyes "a multitude of virgins, clothed in white garments, all of whom wore golden crowns upon their heads. There walked one amongst them more resplendent than the rest from whose crown such splendour shone forth within the house as to change the night itself into day. She advanced to the bed where the spouse of her Son lay, and bending over her lovingly,

embracing her sweetly. A mantle of wondrous beauty was then brought forth by the virgins, and all working together with emulation, they covered the body of Clare and adorned the couch. Thus on the day after that of Blessed Laurence, that most holy soul passed away . . . and her spirit soared happily heavenward". So in her dying as in her living, Clare's is the spirit of light and beauty and love, in worship before the figure of the heavenly King Who on earth was "Christ the Poor."

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From the world which judges of the value of a life by what men *do* rather than by what they *are*, such a life as that of Clare will hardly receive its just meed of appreciation. But happily there is another world to whom the truth and beauty of a life is of more concern than any mere external deed. St. Clare, as we have seen, was more enrapt by the life of the spirit than by external activities. Not that she lacks even in regard to these a claim to greatness. The part she took in the upbuilding of the Franciscan Order, puts her amongst the builders of the organized Catholic body. But greater than this claim upon our reverence is the claim of that clear revelation of Catholic Faith and worship which her life gives to the world. This it was which won for her the admiration and affection of the people of her time. To them she was as a prophetess of the beauty of the Gospel message which St. Francis preached: not merely of its truth, but of its beauty. And it was a beauty the world could, inadequately perhaps but sufficiently, understand. The hardihood of her poor life, the generosity of her renunciation and the joyousness of her worship—these things appealed to them in their new vigour of life, as they must appeal to all men in whom the

youth of the spirit is not dead. In her the eternal chivalry of the human soul shone as a consecrated faith : all the more wonderful because of the grace of her womanliness : she was in truth to her age " The Lady Poverty ".

Truly the Franciscan movement would have been less inspiring had it lacked St. Clare. Undoubtedly the gospel of Franciscan poverty acquired a comeliness and attraction from the personality of the Abbess of San Damiano, which no friar could have given it. In Clare the religion of poverty became transfused in the mind of the world with the transcendent grace of that purity which is the purity of a noble love. The unearthly purity which hovered upon the horizon, but was too frequently lost sight of in the chivalric romance and love-song, was in her resplendently actualized. To the eyes of Umbria and Italy at least she was a sublimation of the new womanhood of the romance, fashioned in love and joy and worship : but to this she added the glory of a purity which compelled and justified the deepest reverence. And so happened what the Legend recounts : " Virgins hasten after her example to keep themselves as they are for Christ ; married women strive to live more chastely. The eager crowd of youths is incited to take part in the stainless conflicts, and is urged by the hardy examples of the weaker sex to spurn the allurements of the flesh. Many joined in matrimony, by mutual consent bind themselves with the law of continency ; men passing to the Orders and women to the cloisters. . . . All with emulous fervour desire to serve Christ ; all wish to have a share in this angelic life which has become resplendent through Clare." History bears out this pæan of praise : for not only did convents of Poor Clares spring up over all the land, but many women living in their homes put on the habit of the Clares and sought to live their life : and that

the fervour of womankind turned the thoughts of men to the pure life is perhaps seen in the spread of the Brothers of Penance—the *Continenti* as they were frequently styled —who did so much to save Christian society in the thirteenth century from an invading secularism.

The Office of St. Clare, said by the Friars Minor Capuchin on her feast day, begins with these words: "*Posuit me custodem in vineis: vineæ florentes dederunt odorem suum*" —*The Lord put me a keeper among the vines: the vines flourished and gave forth their fragrance.* No more apt summing up is there of the story of St. Clare.

THE STORY OF THE FRIARS

I

The history of the Franciscan friars during the first two centuries and more of their existence, is emphatically the history of Christendom. There was no movement of vital interest during that period in which they had no part. Theology, politics, art and the social condition of the people, all in some measure were touched by their influence, though their chief achievement was in the sphere of Catholic piety.

But for centuries it has been the fashion to disparage their work and character, and even at the present time when the story of their founder is generally spoken of with admiration, the order which he founded is as generally held up as a betrayal of his ideal. Thus, Francis, the simple mendicant of Assisi, content with a peasant's tunic and a cell of wattles and a crust of bread, whose only book was the crucifix, is painted in vivid colours against a background of friars building large houses, hunting for legacies and avid for learning.

Such a picture is not only false in its sweeping denunciation : it, moreover, lacks that philosophical insight into the course of human history which is a first requisite of the genuine historian. Francis the individual is exalted at the expense of Francis the centre of a great world-movement ; and the Franciscan life, with all that it properly stands for,

is regarded as the mere inspiration of a single individual instead of a being acknowledged, as it should be, as an evolution of the Catholic spirit.

In truth the Franciscan fraternity was an outcome of the awakening of the Catholic consciousness in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries to a vital aspect of Christian tradition hitherto realized but vaguely by the mass of Christians. It was not so much a protest against the prevalent moral laxity and spiritual depression as a positive rejuvenescence of the Catholic spirit itself, the discovery of a harmony where the world had hitherto found only a discord. The great feat of St. Francis and his followers was that they instinctively achieved a union between the new secular spirit of the time and the new spirit of piety which for a century past had seized hold of mediaeval Christendom. The student of mediaeval history is beginning to pay greater attention to the new religious devotion which played so notable a part in the formation of the later middle age. It is, however, still commonly assumed that the twelfth century was a period of almost unalloyed worldliness, and the spiritual growth of the time is largely ignored. Yet behind the worldly glitter there was present a deep and expanding spiritual life. In the cloisters, especially, there was going on more or less quietly a religious revolution : an earlier formation was giving way before a quickening of the spirit ; and once again the monasteries—especially those of the Cistercian Order—were centres of a new spiritual life and a new form of Catholic piety. The essential character of this new piety lay in its exquisite apprehension of the humanity of Jesus Christ as the revelation of Divine Truth and the type of Christian character. The twelfth century, it must be remembered, was alive with the felt mystery of the personal

human life. Men had suddenly become conscious of themselves as individual centres of activity. A new belief in themselves and a worship of the human personality, had emerged out of the chaos and depression of soul caused by the breakdown of the old order of things when men pinned their faith to social law and worshipped the common life. In secular life the new spirit uttered itself in the love-songs of the minstrels and *chansons d'aventure:* in the cloisters the same spirit was manifested in the prose-poetry of St. Bernard and in hymns of the type of the *Jesu dulcis memoria.*

But in the monasteries the new piety and its compelling spirit were bound up with the tradition of an earlier time: the essential lines of the monastic life had been set when men felt more the need of the common life than of personal action. It was St. Francis who gave to the new piety its true world setting. He himself was a simple child of the age in which he was born. In him the new Time-spirit which was bringing into being new ways of thought and motives of action, and creating new political and social ideals as well as religious, entirely dominated. When he thought it was in the forms current in his own day; when he acted it was in the romantic spirit of the time. On its secular side his inspiration came to him from the world in which he lived, with its minstrels and beggars and its passion for adventure. When he formed his fraternity he instinctively formed it on the idea of knight-errantry: instinctively, too, his religious code of conduct was formed by the chivalric code: and chivalry and knight-errantry were but symbols of the new spirit which had invaded Christendom. Again, when a more stable and workable organization became necessary for the fraternity, the form of government introduced has a far closer resemblance to

the form of a new civic republic than to the older feudal type and embodies a democratic feeling alien to the older monasteries. Thus, then, the Franciscan Order was born of the age in which it arose—whether we consider the age on its secular side or its religious ; and this fact gives to the fraternity a world character which it would not have had, had it been the creation merely of an individual mind.

It was doubtless owing in large measure to their close relationship with the mind of their time that the Franciscans in the thirteenth century wielded so enormous an influence : they naturally sympathized with and understood the legitimate aspirations of the age, even whilst they set themselves against its abuses and errors. But this same felt relationship with the world would lead them on to developments outside the original programme of their activities. Thus, once the fraternity issued from the seclusion of Umbria and came into touch with the wider world, problems arose which it could not shirk. As by the very instinct of their being, the friars were drawn to the industrial towns and the universities, the centres of the new progressive spirit ; nor could they stand apart from the life they found there if they were to fulfil the apostolate which was inherent in their vocation. The situation thus created was more complex than it had been at the Porziuncola : it held greater dangers to the pure simplicity of the Franciscan spirit whilst it presented opportunities for legitimate labours which the friars could not refuse without disloyalty to their calling.

Rightly then, to read the story of the friars, we must read it with an eye to the bigger issues, as we read the history of a nation or people : and we must fix our attention upon the persistence not so much of this or that external detail, as upon the great elemental truths out of which the

fraternity issued. What we ask ourselves is: Did the Franciscans as a body in the course of their development maintain that note of personal freedom conjoined with and governed by devotion to the Person of Christ, which was the dominant characteristic of St. Francis and the original fraternity? for that is the fundamental principle which determines the Franciscan genius and ideal. At the same time the persistence of external forms in the life of the fraternity has its own particular value as witnessing to the identity of the spiritual ideal; for every community which maintains an individual corporate existence there will be found a continuity of form as well as of spirit. Institutions may grow and expand and in many ways change; and they must do so if they are to live and flourish; but they cannot contradict their origins without a break in the spiritual life of the people: and so a continuity of form is rightly taken as an evidence within limits of the persistence of the spirit; only it must be an organic continuity and not as some seem to assume, a mere stolid adherence to form.

From what has already been said, it will be evident that to set down the Franciscan life in any merely external programme would be altogether misleading. Just because it was the spontaneous expression of elemental truths and ideals, it escapes words and can be adequately uttered only in a living tradition. If, as is frequently done, the ideal of the order is summed up in the word "poverty," we must give to the word the full significance it had in the mind of St. Francis, otherwise we leave out of count such essential aspects of the ideal as simplicity of soul, the love of one's neighbour, the special devotion to the earthly life of Our Lord; all which enter into the Franciscan life. In truth, as we have seen elsewhere, Franciscan poverty is but the symbol or sacramental sign of that many-sided life which

St. Francis understood as the following of Christ in His redemptive mission on earth. And in this the poverty of St. Francis differed from the poverty preached by the sectaries of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. With these it was a gospel of protest ; and like all gospels of protest, it was narrow and depressing and a terror to peace-loving men. Nothing could be more unlike the message brought by St. Francis. He was the very antithesis of a " protestant " ; he believed good of all men ; he honoured the Church, and wherever his message was received it left men light-hearted and glad to live. That was because his gospel was a true revelation ; it opened men's eyes to a new value in life and set their souls free as in a new day ; and every man could get his freedom for the taking of it. His salvation did not depend upon his reforming the world but upon his reforming himself. If the Franciscans eventually became social reformers, it was as a consequence of their vocation, not as a primary motive. When he made his vow of poverty, the friar was not thinking of his neighbours' worldliness, but of his own ; he renounced himself only to find himself in a nobler life, and his sole ambition was to walk personally in the footsteps of the Lord Whom he had undertaken to follow. There was therefore a certain radical inwardness about the Franciscan vocation ; it gave men a new life in themselves and a new vision. Perhaps at no other time did the purely evangelical life take more complete possession of man's heart and imagination than it did amongst those early Franciscans ; with them it was not so much a profession as a felt joy of faith ; they were possessed by the Christ-spirit and yet they were in a most intimate sense themselves. That was the great difference between them and the sectaries of the time to whom the Gospel was never anything more sublime than " a legal prescription of

the external conduct of life ".[1] But with the Franciscans the Gospel was an inner light revealing new value in all the world about them. It was one of the notable traits of the Franciscans that wherever their influence was felt, the common things of life received a sort of religious consecration. They preached the sanctity of marriage and of human relationships, they brought the Christian ideal to bear upon politics and the social order ; they gave a dignity to the poor and instilled a sense of responsibility into the rich man's use of his wealth. They did much to humanize religious art ; and entered into the spirit of popular song. Common human life was, so to speak, the field of their spiritual operation. They were apostles of a Christian humanity. But this was because in the Franciscan ideal of life they had found a real harmony between the Gospel and men's nature.

This peculiar inwardness of the Franciscan ideal differentiates the apostolate of the Franciscan friars from that of their contemporaries, the Dominicans. The purpose of St. Dominic and his followers was to defend the purity of Catholic dogma against the intellectual errors of the day ; the primary object of the Franciscan's preaching was to bring men to live a practical Christian life. And the Franciscan was not primarily a preacher in the sense that the Dominican was, he stood more broadly a worker amongst men. The Franciscan fulfilled his external vocation as much when he laboured in the fields, or when he nursed the lepers, or fed the hungry, as when he preached. His primary duty was to live the gospel of poverty ; he went forth to preach only as a consequence of that impelling love of his fellow-men which was inherent in his vocation. But this same love of his fellow-men might make of him a

[1] Cf. Luthardt, *History of Christian Ethics*, vol. I, p. 384.

prayerful recluse, spending himself at the feet of God in intercession for sinners ; or it might make of him a servant of the sick poor, or a peacemaker between cities at war. In this sense it may be said, whereas the Dominican apostolate was governed by zeal for the Catholic Truth, the Franciscan apostolate was dominated by a vast compassion for the ills of mankind.

Here, too, it may be well to point out the difference between a monk and a friar. The orders of friars, it should be remembered, all originated in the later Middle Ages and represent in greater or less degree the temperament of the time in which they began. Of the Franciscan friar, however, it is especially true that he " represents the religious individualism of the West ". We have seen how the fraternity sprang out of the new romantic spirit and the new piety, both strongly individualistic in character. The monk was the result of quite a distinct need of the human spirit. Monasticism in the West, in so far as it became a world-factor, consecrated the idea of the common life. The Benedictine monastery by excellence represents the Christian commune. The natural life of the monks showed itself instinctively in their work. They brought the rude and lawless spirit of the new Western nations into obedience to law and into a sense of fellowship ; they taught Ostrogoth and Visigoth, Frank and Anglo-Saxon, the arts of civilized society. And this the monks did not in a school-mastering fashion, but by the evidence and influence of their own life. They settled amongst the people, and the monastery with its well-ordered routine commonly became the nucleus of a Christian community or " colony " ; it was not so much the individual action of the monk as his corporate action which civilized the new Christian peoples of the West. It was otherwise with the friars. Their action upon the world

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was essentially personal. It was the friar rather than the friary, who saved religion in the thirteenth century; and the reason was because his appeal was for the renovation of the personal life of his hearers. In so far as he sought to renovate society it was not by building up institutions and systems but by a direct appeal to the personal conscience. He stood in the eyes of the people for the personal element in religion rather than for the social; and the people instinctively judged him aright. Hence the friary was not to the friar what the monastery was to the monk. The friar strictly speaking had no stable home; the friary was properly but a resting-place or retreat, or it was a training-ground for fashioning him in that personal life and activity which belonged to his vocation. Consequently in the primitive friary there was a marked simplicity in the external common life and a comparative absence of ceremonial; as befitted men whose character depended upon personality rather than upon the organized community.

Thus, then, the Franciscans had a distinctive place in the organization of the Church, and a distinctive message for the Christian people; nor can we judge them aright except as we bear these things in mind. We will now speak of the life of the friars as it manifested itself in its external action.

II

In St. Francis himself and his first disciples, the Franciscan ideal manifested itself in its simplest and purest form; they, therefore, gave us the supreme type and standard of Franciscan life. It will be well to glance at the type before we speak of the later developments.

The fraternity dates its institution from the year 1210, or, as some say, from 1209, when Francis, having already renounced his inheritance and made himself a poor man for Christ's sake, gathered around him several companions. Some of these like himself were men of wealth, who now "sold all that they had and gave it to the poor" and with Francis became poor.

For three years before this Francis had been living a life of strict poverty, working with his hands and begging his bread. He had run the gauntlet of ridicule and now by sheer force of character and his evident sincerity, was winning the respect of his fellow-citizens. He was still an enigma to them. Some wondered why he did not join a monastic order; but Francis would reply that he was called only to serve God in poverty. Some continued to wonder and did not understand. In truth Francis at first hardly understood himself; only by degrees did his vocation become clear to him.

But early in the spring of 1210 he was one day hearing Mass when these words of the Gospel fell upon his ears: "And going, preach, saying: The kingdom of heaven is at

hand. Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out devils: freely have ye received, freely give. Do not possess gold, nor silver, nor money in your purses: nor scrip for your journey, nor two coats, nor shoes, nor a staff; for the workman is worthy of his meat."[1] Francis, moved with sudden conviction, took the words as directed personally to himself: and straightway adopted them as his rule of life. He at once cast aside his shoes and went forth barefooted, and as he met people on the road, he began to admonish them to love God and save their souls. Thus to the life of poverty was added the apostolate. Within a few weeks he had gained his first disciples. Once again he consulted the book of the Gospels and read these three passages at three openings of the book: "If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow Me". "And He sent them to preach the Kingdom of God and to heal the sick." "And Jesus said to His disciples: If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whosoever will save his life, shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for My sake, shall find it."[2] Again Francis took the words as indicating the life to which God was calling him and his companions: they were to put off all earthly possessions; they were to go about preaching the Kingdom and healing the sick. It is characteristic of St. Francis and the early Franciscan movement that these first friars took the words of the Gospel literally and without hesitation acted upon them. And when very shortly after this they went to the Pope to seek his approbation of their mode of life, they presented for his approval a Rule which was little else than a few excerpts from the Gospel itself. They returned from Rome

[1] Matt. x. 7–10. [2] Matt. xix. 21; Luke ix. 2, 23–24.

with a papal commission "to go about preaching penance," that is to say, to preach a renovation of conduct in accordance with the precepts of the Gospel; and at once they set about their mission. But their preaching to others was subordinate to the living of their own proper life: their first solicitude was to give effect to the poverty they professed, to care for the sick and to discharge other acts of Christian fellowship; to achieve by prayer and self-discipline the life of Christ which was their ultimate ideal. They considered that they fulfilled their mission "to preach penance" more by faithfully exhibiting in themselves the Christ-life which was their faith, than by expounding it in words. They were in no sense a band of conventional preachers. The manner of their apostolate has been thus happily described by M. Sabatier: "The first brothers lived as did the poor people among whom they so willingly moved: Porziuncola was their favourite church, but it would be a mistake to suppose that they sojourned there for any long period. It was their place of meeting, nothing more. When they set forth they simply knew that they should meet again in the neighbourhood of the modest chapel. Their life was that of the Umbrian beggars of the present day, going here and there as fancy dictated, sleeping in hay-lofts, in leper hospitals, or under the porch of some church. . . . They went up and down the country, joyfully sowing their seed. It was the beginning of summer, the time when everybody in Umbria is out of doors, mowing or turning the grass. The customs of the country have changed but little. Walking in the end of May in the fields about Florence, Perugia, or Rieti, one still sees at nightfall the bagpipers entering the fields as the mowers seat themselves upon the haycocks for their evening meal. They play a few pieces, and then the train of haymakers return to the village,

followed by the harvest-laden carts. It is they who lead the procession, rending the air with their sharpest strains. The joyous penitents who loved to call them *Joculatores Domini*, God's *jongleurs*, no doubt often did the same. They did even better, for not willing to be a charge to anyone, they passed a part of the day in aiding the peasants in their field work. The inhabitants of these districts are for the most part kindly and sedate. The friars soon gained their confidence by relating to them first their history and then their hopes. They worked and ate together, field-hands and friars often slept in the same barn, and when with the morrow's dawn the friars went on their way, the hearts of those they had left behind had been touched. They were not yet converted, but they knew that not far away over towards Assisi were living men who had renounced all worldly goods, and who consumed with zeal were going up and down preaching penitence and peace."[1]

This picture is substantially true to fact. The first friars could hardly be said to have any proper home; Rivo Torto was but a temporary shelter: the Porziuncola was their meeting-place and their retreat when they returned from their journeys. As one of their first writers said, the wide world was their cloister.[2] They went hither and thither, admonishing those with whom they conversed that they should love God and fear Him and do worthy penance for their sins.[3] They worked for their bread when they could and when this failed them, they went and

[1] *Vie de S. François*, chap. v., Eng. Transl., p. 77.

[2] *Sacrum Commercium*. Cf. Montgomery Carmichael's translation under the title, *The Lady Poverty*, chap. XXIV. p. 128: "And they, leading her (Poverty) to the summit of a hill, showed her the wide world, saying: This is our cloister, O Lady Poverty."

[3] Cf. *Vita Fr. Ægidii*, in *Anal. Franc.*, III. p. 76.

begged.[1] On their journeys they suffered many hardships, chiefly because people were apt to mistake them for mere vagabonds or wandering heretics or poor simpletons: so unconventional were they and different from the already recognized religious orders.[2] But wherever they went they made themselves friends to the sick and needy: they would interrupt a journey to nurse a sick man whom they came across on the way; they shared their alms with other poor.[3] Also they persistently preached peace in that time of warring factions and feuds.[4] Amongst themselves they showed a remarkable love one for the other. "They loved each other," says the writer of the *Legend of the Three Companions*, "with deep affection and each served and cherished the other even as a mother serves and loves an only well-beloved child. Indeed so great was the charity which burned in them that it would have seemed a light thing for them to deliver their body to death, not only for the love of Christ, but for the welfare of the souls, nay, even the bodies of their brethren."[5] And in the midst of want and hardships they exhibit a light-hearted joyousness which frequently bursts out into song.

Here then we have a well-defined type which one naturally looks for in studying the later developments of the fraternity. Whatever changes take place when the fraternity has to take to itself a more formal organization, the friars must still keep a close affinity of spirit with these first friars, if we are to recognize them as true to the original ideal.

[1] Cf. *Testament of St. Francis*; also *Vita Fr. Ægidii*, *ut supra*, p. 77 *seq.*

[2] Cf. *Leg.* 3 *Soc.*, chap. x.: where, however, the writer evidently refers to a somewhat later time as well as to the first days.

[3] Cf. *Leg.* 3 *Soc.*, chap. xi.; *Testament of St. Francis*; *Vita Fr. Ægidii*, *ut supra.*

[4] St. Francis himself intervened at Assisi, Arezzo and Perugia.

[5] *Leg.* 3 *Soc.*, chap. xi.

As is well known, the fraternity increased in numbers with marvellous rapidity: within ten years after Innocent III had given his approval to the Rule, a Chapter was held at which five thousand friars assembled. The idyllic days had passed into the dramatic; and the life lifted up above the world into the pure ideal was becoming more conscious of its relationships with the world; and the friars had begun to debate the problems which arose out of this consciousness. One may regret perhaps that it had to be so; but it seems to be a law of life that the ideal must descend into the earth in order to raise the earth up towards itself; and in the process much that is beautiful in the pure ideal is inevitably lost to sight. The ideal then becomes an underlying influence more often than a clear and visible fact; only here and there does it show itself without alloy, convincing men of its continued presence. So it is with all realizations of the nobler ideals in the world's life.

The beginning of the change manifested itself in the growing demand for a written Rule more formal and definite in detail than that which Francis had presented to Pope Innocent. At first the personality of Francis was deemed a sufficient interpretation of the friars' ideal: but with the growth of the fraternity and the scattering abroad of the brethren there came the need of a more complex organization and of a less personal government.

The *Regula Prima*[1] clearly indicates the first steps in the evolution of the organized fraternity. The friars are now subject to provincial and local superiors; novices are admitted to be professed only after a year's probation; those who can read must recite the Divine office daily; there are definite regulations concerning fasting and abstinence and the manner of going about outside

[1] Cf. *Opuscula S. Franc.* (ed. Quaracchi), p. 24 *seq.*

the friary. But the primitive life is still very much in evidence. Some at least of the brethren are servants in the houses of seculars as the Rule shows, since it ordains that they shall not be "keepers of the chambers nor cellarers nor overseers," and that they shall be "inferior and subject to all who are in the said house". Moreover, the Brethren still largely dwell not in large friaries but in small hermitages or retreats, clustered together within certain areas, as at Assisi, since "wheresoever the Brethren dwell, they shall frequently visit one another". Preaching and manual labour play a great part in their life. Those appointed to preach, "whether they be clerics or lay-brothers," are told to "humble themselves in all things nor inwardly exalt themselves for any good which God may sometimes say or do by them"; they are to shun the wisdom of the world, for "the spirit of the world cares much for words but little for works, and it seeks not religion and sanctity of heart but a religion and sanctity which may appear before men". They are in fact to be "doers of the word" even more than preachers; to "preach by their works".

As regards labour the Rule declares: "Let all the Brethren who know how to work labour and exercise themselves in the art they understand, provided it be not unbecoming nor contrary to the salvation of their souls. For the Prophet says: 'For because thou shalt eat the labour of thy hands blessed art thou and it shall be well with thee'. And the Apostle says: 'If any man will not work, neither let him eat'. Let everyone, therefore, keep steadfast to the art or trade in which he is skilled; and in payment for their work they may receive whatever is necessary for them but not money. And if they be in want let them ask alms like other poor. They

may have the tools and instruments required for their work. . . . Let all the servants of God always persevere in prayer or in some other profitable labour." Further, the friars are "to rejoice when they are in company with persons who are mean and despised by the world, with the poor and weak, with the infirm and lepers, and with those who beg in the streets. And whenever it is necessary they shall go asking alms; and let them not be ashamed, but remember that Our Lord Jesus Christ . . . became poor and a stranger, and lived on alms together with the Blessed Virgin and His disciples."

A further step in the evolution of the fraternity is marked by the *Regula Secunda*, the "Rule of 1223".[1] This Rule, written, it would seem, under the supervision of Cardinal Ugolino, was prepared with a view to its final and solemn approbation by the Holy See. It has much more the character of a legal charter than has the previous Rule of 1221: in it the prudence of the statesman has evidently tempered the zeal of the apostle. The broad and fundamental principles underlying the earlier Rule are all to be found in the final Rule: the friars are to possess nothing, "neither house nor land nor anything at all"; they are to "work faithfully and devoutly," and "for their labour they may receive whatever is necessary for the needs of the body, both for themselves and their brethren, and this humbly as becomes servants of God and followers of most holy poverty"; "as pilgrims and strangers in this world, serving the Lord in poverty and lowliness, they shall go begging with confidence." Poverty is the treasure which shall bring them into the Kingdom of God. But whilst the principles are thus plainly enunciated special applications of the principles,

[1] Cf. *Opuscula, ut supra*, p. 63 *seq.*

such as found place in the earlier Rule, are omitted ;[1] as are also the long and fervent exhortations which are a marked feature in that Rule. The fraternity as a corporate body has now passed through its period of pupilage and attained to manhood. When St. Francis submitted his final Rule for the approval of the Pope, it was like a father sending his son out into the world to fight his own battle : and wisely, as we must all admit, the Holy See insisted that the charter of independence given to the fraternity, whilst establishing it in the essential principles of the primitive ideal, should nevertheless be such as should not cramp its legitimate activity and development. It remained for the friars themselves to maintain their Franciscan character and tradition whilst using the proper liberty given them by the wisdom of the Church. The fraternity now passed definitely out of the region of the pure ideal into the storm and stress of the world's actual life. Henceforth the Franciscan friar's mission was no longer to be limited by the idyllic conditions of Umbria, but to be as broad as Christendom and to make itself felt in every department of Christian life.

[1] e.g., cf. Regula I, capp. 5, 14.

III

A DEEPLY interesting human story is that of the Franciscan fraternity. Nowhere is the perpetual conflict between a spiritual ideal and weak human nature more vividly portrayed. At one time the ideal triumphs and at another it is thrown back ; now it is the spirit of worldly prudence and relaxation which prevails ; and again it is the heroic simplicity and fervour of St. Francis. The friars' story is in truth a veritable drama ; sometimes a tragedy, sometimes a comedy ; but for three centuries at least—the period we have under review—it seldom lacked vitality. In this essay we can but touch upon some of the determining points in its history.

We find then, within a very few years after the promulgation of the final Rule, that a change has come over the face of the fraternity. The friars no longer sojourn in abandoned churches or rude huts ; but in houses especially built for them. There are still hermitages to be found where two or three friars dwell together in something of the primitive simplicity ; but, especially in the towns, the friaries are of a fair size and in them the conventual form of life has been introduced, and in the eyes of the people the friary has become a smaller monastery. The friars still in some measure cultivate manual labour, but " those who serve in the houses of others " are mostly there as scribes or secretaries, for the friars have become a learned body ; they have taken to study and invaded the universities and

they occupy chairs in the schools. Here we have what looks at first sight much like a going back from the original ideal. To some extent, as things turned out in practice, it was so ; nor have we any wish to minimize this fact. But because the conventual friary has displaced the primitive hut, or because a friar lectures in a university chair instead of labouring with the peasants in the field, we must not conclude at once that we are face to face with a betrayal of St. Francis's spirit. Notwithstanding the large houses which were built for their use, the Franciscan yet remained very much a wanderer on the earth, an itinerant preacher ; and for every friar who taught in the university there were hundreds who spent their lives ministering to the multitudes in town and courtyard.

To some extent St. Francis himself was responsible for the conventual friary[1] and the schools. He had thrown open the fraternity to all sorts and conditions of men. The only demand he made upon them was that they repent of their sins and be willing to follow Christ in poverty. The fraternity even in the days of St. Francis was no carefully selected society of saints and heroes : for the chief part the friars were ordinary mortals aspiring to a religious life and won over by the religious enthusiasm created by the Franciscan preaching. For such a multitude a far stricter and more definite organization and training was necessary than could be obtained in the hermitage or simple shelter of the first days : otherwise the fraternity might easily have drifted and become a fanatical horde or sect at war with Church and society, as was the case with many other reforming bodies at the time : at best the Franciscan movement would have fizzled out in ineffective individual

[1] I use the term "conventual friary" to denote the larger houses as opposed to the hermitages and small houses.

enthusiasms. Jacques de Vitry in his observant way had foreseen the need of a more formal discipline for the novices who entered the fraternity : and this in itself would lead to the establishment of friaries large enough to shelter the increasing number of novices. Moreover, it would have been out of the question in any case for a multitude of friars, separated from the ordinary life of the world, to continue without permanent dwellings and to be quartered upon other people. One has but to put the situation into words to realize its absurdity. Then, once the large houses were in being, the tendency towards the monastic ideal, which here and there showed itself amongst the friars, becomes intelligible.

Again, as regards the schools, once St. Francis determined to send forth his brethren to preach, the necessity for theological study might have been foretold. In the first enthusiasm created by the friars, the people drank in every word, urged by the emotion of the hour, and the friars themselves, exalted in spirit by the highly spiritual atmosphere which they breathed in the presence of St. Francis, could draw upon that spiritual vision which was ever present to their souls, for the instruction they imparted. At intense moments in human life, the simplest words suffice to reveal the inmost spirit of men. It is otherwise when they require to be convinced by visible facts and logical argument. The preacher who in the midst of a revival is listened to with rapture, oftentimes fails when once the first enthusiasm has passed away. Nor does the enthusiasm depend altogether upon the preacher himself, but is incident to the awakening religious sense of which he is the spokesman. Hence to the friars theological study eventually became a necessity if they were to fulfil the mission handed on to them by their founder. Already the

Church had had trouble with itinerant preachers who in their ignorance oftentimes put forth heresy :[1] and it is not surprising therefore that Cardinal Ugolino encouraged the building of a school for the friars at Bologna during St. Francis's lifetime, nor that the Holy See looked with distrust upon uneducated preachers. But it was not merely for the sake of preaching that the friars developed their schools, though that was the first reason in point of time. St. Francis had unconsciously but effectively given a new impetus to Thought amongst his followers, in giving them a new point of vision and a new view of life. In the normal course of things this led to intellectual inquiry and produced a set of thinkers in the fraternity to whom literary self-expression became a vital necessity ; and as naturally these thinkers would become centres of intellectual activity as long as the fraternity was really alive. Moreover, it may be doubted whether any large body of men in normal conditions can maintain a high level of spirituality without a certain intellectual and scholastic training. The mental discipline gained in a sharp struggle for life, whether in the order of the world or in the interior spirit, will more than compensate in spiritual development for lack of school instruction ; but the majority of men in ordinary circumstances are not subjected to this discipline, and unless their minds are stimulated by contact with the thought of other men, they lapse into that mental darkness which atrophies the soul. Hence St. Bonaventure told the friars : the study of theology—and by theology he meant the science of life taken religiously—" is useful not only for the instruction of others but also for one's own instruction in order that

[1] e.g., Odo, Bishop of Paris, in 1197 warned his clergy against " ignorant and illiterate preachers," and forbade the people to listen to them under pain of excommunication (cf. Harduin, *Acta Conc.*, VI. p. 1945). Such warnings were not infrequent in that period.

the servant of God may know how to govern himself wisely, to discern virtues from vices, and to understand more clearly what we know concerning God and the future rewards, and to walk in all things more carefully and with greater fruit ".[1]

So then the establishment of schools for the friars was a necessity in the very nature of things ; and it is absurd therefore to speak of them as opposed to the Franciscan ideal. They might be opposed to the true ideal or they might not : it would all depend upon the sort of school.

The same is to be said of the friary buildings which took the place of the early rude shelters. These rude shelters had to give place to more permanent and commodious buildings : the only question is : Were these friaries in accord with the essential poverty and idealism of the fraternity ? In the thirteenth century and for long afterwards this question was debated amongst the friars themselves, not academically but with piteous fervour or hot passion as men debate questions which concern their most sacred convictions. Human nature being what it is, developments in any society always give occasion for the introduction of ideas which are foreign to the proper character and purpose of the society. This tendency soon showed itself amongst the Franciscans : the great convent of Assisi is perhaps its monumental symbol. It would be easy to trace in many of the friaries and churches of the Order which arose in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries what may be termed the spirit of relaxation ; but it is just as easy, as we shall see, to show from the existing early friaries how the ideal of poverty and simplicity which characterized the earliest days maintained itself within the

[1] *Determinationes quaest.*, 3 ; in *Opera Omnia*, ed. Quaracchi, Vol. VIII, p. 339.

fraternity. So much has been written about the infidelity of the Franciscan Order to its original purpose that few people who have not specially studied Franciscan history are aware of the continual effort made during the three centuries which followed St. Francis's death to reproduce in the Order the original type as far as the changed conditions of time and place permitted. Every fresh inroad of the spirit of relaxation was met by a passionate effort of reform. The struggle began in the lifetime of St. Francis himself and straightway divided the friars into two contending parties. At first and for many years the two parties formed one homogeneous family juridically: in the same house and province friars who favoured relaxation and those who stood for the stricter observance, existed side by side under the same superiors; and the general temper of any particular community depended upon the numbers of moral strength of either party. The extreme party of "primitive observance" soon came to be known as "spirituals". They viewed all departures from the primitive type as apostasy. Some of them degenerated into fanatics and set themselves against all but their own narrow interpretations of the Franciscan Rule. But as a body they were sincere upholders of the original ideal, driven at times into extreme courses in sheer defence of the faith they held. These "spirituals" were mostly to be found in the hermitages and small houses far removed from the world's highways.[1] They were however but a small party in the Order. Amongst the "friars of the community"—as those friars were styled who lived in the larger houses—the passion for the primitive ideal varied in both the individual friars and the communities. The more fervent, whilst recognizing the need to accommodate themselves to the circumstances in which they were

[1] Cf. Ehrle, *Archiv für Literat. und Kirchgesch.*, III. p. 554 *seq.*

cast, yet kept manfully in view the original ideal upon which the Order was founded. Such were those English friars to whom Thomas of Eccleston wrote. They did not hesitate, for instance, to establish schools and cultivate learning; yet were they the most zealous defenders of the Rule in all that concerned the fundamental poverty of the fraternity.[1] On the other hand, the "prudence of the world" was constantly at work amongst the friars of the community, and throughout the Order, but especially in France and Italy, there was a sharp contention between the opposing parties. Attempts were made by St. Bonaventure to effect a compromise: but the compromise satisfied neither party. His capitular decrees concerning the poverty to be observed in the building of churches, for example, were commonly disregarded by the one party, whilst his marked preference for monastic usages and large houses was not acceptable to the others. Eventually it was found necessary to segregate the two parties into different communities; the friars who adhered to the stricter observance of the Rule withdrawing, with permission of the Holy See, from those who favoured relaxation. Thus began the long line of Franciscan reforms and the division of the Order into separate jurisdictions. The reform movement did not begin in any general concerted movement throughout the fraternity, nor did it at first lead to juridical divisions. The "Observant" communities were still for many years under the same higher superiors as were the relaxed communities; they had permission either from the Minister-General or from the Pope to live in separate houses, until in the early part of the fifteenth century, chiefly through the efforts of St. Bernardine of Siena, the observant communities were united under

[1] Cf. Eccleston, *De Adventu FF. Min. in Angliam*, in *Monumenta Franciscana* (Roll Series, 1858); critical edition of A. G. Little (Paris, 1910).

the jurisdiction of a Vicar-General.[1] From that moment the "Observant" reform spread rapidly throughout Europe. At the same time similar but distinct reforms were at work in France and Spain. In 1517 Leo X united all the various reformed communities under the supreme jurisdiction of a Minister-General and entirely separated them from the "friars of the community" who accepted relaxations of the Rule and who henceforth were known as Conventuals. Yet even this did not end the long struggle. Amongst the Observants themselves there were those who accepted modified relaxations and those who aimed at a still purer observance. Thus arose the reforms of the Récollets in France, of the Alcantarines in Spain, and the Capuchins in Italy.

Now, the purpose of all these reforms was more or less a reversion to the original type. To take, for example, the Capuchin reform: it undoubtedly revived the primitive tradition to a remarkable degree. Its constitutions, drawn up in the sixteenth century, breathe the very spirit of the *Fioretti*. The friars, according to these constitutions, are forbidden not only to hold property of any kind but even to make any large provision against temporal wants: they are told to "remember that their heavenly Father knows how, and is able and willing to provide for them. They are not therefore like the heathens who do not believe in Divine Providence, with much care and anxiety to procure for themselves the things of this world which God bestows with bounteous hand even upon the brute creature; but as true sons of the Eternal Father, laying aside all solicitude, they shall in all things depend on the Divine liberality and abandon themselves entirely to His infinite goodness."[2] Wherefore they were to make no provision of the neces-

[1] On the genesis of the Observant reform see Ferrers Howell: *St. Bernardino of Siena*, pp. 1–82.

[2] *Constitutiones Capp.*, cap. 6.

saries of life which could be obtained daily, excepting in special cases. And since Franciscan poverty is with difficulty observed in large communities, the Capuchins were to have small houses. At first they made a rule that no more than eight friars shall dwell in a country house, nor more than twelve in a town house.[1] Their churches were to be small, "since as our Father St. Francis says, it gives a better example to preach in the churches of others than in their own". Everything in the church was to be poor but clean, "since God desires and delights more in a pure heart and holy deeds than in things which are costly and richly adorned". Their houses are to resemble "the cottages of the poor and not the palaces of the rich". The ideal aimed at by the Capuchins was the primitive simplicity of the fraternity: hence in their common life they were to avoid much ceremonial, since "a multiplicity of ceremonies paves the way to relaxation". Their original intention was in fact to combine a sort of eremitical life with the active apostolate. The constitution relating to preachers says: "And lest those who preach to others, themselves become reprobate, let them sometimes leave the concourse of people and return to solitude and with the most sweet Saviour ascend the mountain of holy prayer and contemplation, and there let them remain for so long a time until they are filled with God, and the impulse of the Holy Spirit again moves them to scatter Divine graces upon the world". No clearer evidence is required to show that the primitive spirit was still vigorous amongst the friars after three long centuries, in spite of whatever may be urged to the contrary.

It may be well, however, to note here some of the dominant influences which tended to relaxation in the fraternity.

[1] Cf. *The Catholic Encyclopædia*, Vol. III, art. "Capuchins."

In the first place, decline seems always to have begun with the building of large churches and houses. According to the *Speculum Perfectionis*, St. Francis " wished that the brethren should not live together in great numbers, because it seemed to him difficult for a multitude to observe poverty ".[1] Certainly in the eyes of the companions of the saint the iniquities of Brother Elias culminated in his building of the great basilica and convent at Assisi. The reasons why the large houses contributed to a relaxation of the original Rule seem to have been these: In the large community external observances were easily multiplied; so that in the large friary, life became almost as ceremonious as in the Benedictine abbey: and thus a foreign element was introduced into the Franciscan life, which is always disastrous to any society. Then again it was difficult to support a large house without recourse to legacies and bequests, which was manifestly against the pure ideal of most high poverty as held in the beginning of the fraternity. The charges made against the friars of hunting for legacies by the satirists of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were probably exaggerated: for the art of the satirist lives by exaggeration; but state records and municipal archives show how widespread the custom was of making bequests by will to the houses of the friars, and it is undoubtedly true that the acceptance of legacies had a de-spiritualizing effect upon the friars' character and eventually tended to bring them into disrepute. It is noteworthy that the reforms, and especially the Capuchin, strictly forbade the friars who attended dying people, to allow them to leave legacies to the Order.

Another cause of relaxation was the anxiety to increase in numbers. This led to the receiving of candidates who

[1] *Spec. Perfect.*, ed. Sabatier, II. 10.

had no real calling to the Franciscan life, and who consequently brought with them into the fraternity a worldliness of mind which they never cast off. St. Francis himself, as we have already remarked, threw open the fraternity to all manner of men, provided they really repented and showed a desire to follow Jesus Christ in poverty. But the anxiety to increase, here referred to, had its origin in a less spiritual motive. Brother Elias, as we are told, was anxious to multiply provinces in order to rival the Dominicans,[1] and much the same motive led in later years to the reception of unsuitable candidates. Some of these undoubtedly "gave cause to the enemy to blaspheme". Yet when we hear of "ignoble priests and friars . . . who, preaching righteousness, lived unrighteously,"[2] we shall do well to pause and inquire into the facts. As Mr. A. G. Little has pointed out concerning the English friars in their decline, it was not that their lives did not compare favourably with those of other clerics, but that they fell below the lofty idealism of their profession.[3] The spirit of relaxation did not, indeed, manifest itself in grave moral disorders; these things were the exception and largely the invention of the satirists: but the decline showed itself in a lowering of the spiritual vitality of individuals and communities,[4] and in a departure from the pure Franciscan ideal.

The decline reached its lowest ebb in the latter half of the fourteenth century: yet at that very time it was that the tradition in favour of a pure observance of the Rule

[1] Eccleston, ed. Little, p. 51.

[2] *Vide The Cambridge History of English Literature*, Vol. I, p. 332.

[3] *Grey Friars*, p. 8.

[4] The marvellous thing is, that so few cases of positive misconduct can be proved against the friars, considering their vast numbers. According to Holzapfel (*Manuale Historiæ FF. Min.*, p. 145) at the end of the fourteenth century there were not less than 30,000 friars, and probably far more.

took new life. For more than a century the question of the observance of the Rule had been a matter of contention amongst the friars, when in 1334 Fra Giovanni Valle, with four companions, received permission from the Minister-General to form a separate community in which the Rule should be observed in its primitive simplicity. From this small beginning emerged the great Reform of the Strict Observance which in the early years of the following century, under the guidance of St. Bernardine of Siena, gave new life to the fraternity. In the sixteenth century the reformed communities far outnumbered the unreformed.[1]

So it is then that the internal history of the Franciscans during the first three centuries of their existence is mainly the history of a great struggle between the adherents of a stricter observance of the Rule, and those who were willing to receive dispensations. Nor is this to be wondered at when we remember that the essence of the Franciscan life consists in its soaring aspiration after an ideal never altogether apprehended upon this earth. Such a fraternity is more apt than others to be subject to relaxations, just because the letter of its Rule can never adequately express its spirit; whilst, on the other hand, the literal observance of the Rule depends for its vitality upon the supporting spirit. It is surely an evidence of the truth and vigour of the Franciscan ideal that in spite of the natural tendency to relaxation, it could so powerfully attract men and fill them with a longing for a purer observance, as it did the friars of the Reforms. But, as I have said, this is an aspect of Franciscan history which has received but little attention from the modern writers who tell us about the friars.

[1] Holzapfel (op. cit., p. 379) enumerates 2113 houses belonging to the Reform families under the jurisdiction of the Minister-General of the Observance, in 1585. This number does not include the houses of the Capuchin Reform.

IV

We will now consider more particularly the two questions around which, more than any others, the story of the fraternity revolves; namely, the questions of poverty and learning.

Now as regards poverty, the fundamental law, as it stands revealed in the life of St. Francis himself, was that the Friars Minor should be poor men, and share in the poverty of the multitude, thus imitating Jesus Christ Who in His earthly life made Himself one with the poor in their temporal condition. The application of this principle, especially as regards the use of money, the dwellings of the Brethren and their garments, was undoubtedly determined for St. Francis by the condition of the poor of his own day. But it was no part of his mission to stereotype the economic conditions of the mediaeval peasantry. Whether he wore woollen garments or linen, took his wages in coin or kind, lived in a brick cottage or a mud hut, was really a matter of indifference to the essential Franciscan life. What did really matter was that the friar must be poor, have no property of his own nor surplus funds beyond his present need, such as the capitalist possesses; his dwellings and material conditions generally, too, must be in harmony with his profession of poverty. It should, however, be remembered that the material conditions necessary "for the living of a human life" change with difference of climate, of national temperament, and other external influences: and

to the changes due to those conditions over which men have but little control, every society must submit. But these mere accidents of life are of little moment, nor would I refer to them here but that modern writers on St. Francis frequently attempt to represent the Franciscan ideal as bound up with the wattle huts of the Porziuncola or the rude travellers' shelter at Rivo Torto. One might as well demand that the English people should maintain the primitive conditions of the Saxon mark as a proof of the identity of their national existence.

We are not then to judge of the fidelity of the Franciscan friars to their original ideal by their adhesion to or departure from this or that external condition which found a place in their life in Umbria in the year 1210. A rigid conformity in such matters might well denote mere mental or spiritual stagnation. But what we may rightly look for is the ideal which underlay the primitive external manifestation. Judged by this principle I think it must be said that Franciscan history shows a continuity of mind and purpose threading its way through many vicissitudes and changes, which has been too frequently overlooked or ignored by the critics. Take for instance the matter of their buildings.

It is easy to point to a number of churches and houses built by the friars which would seem to have had but a very distant relationship with Franciscan poverty. The great church built by Brother Elias at Assisi, set an example which was not infrequently followed by "the friars of the community". Some excuse may be urged in defence of Elias inasmuch as the church at Assisi was designed to represent the world's homage to the Seraphic Francis; it was not properly a friary church, but an acknowledged papal basilica, of which the friars were to be the custodians. But the great Assisian Church set a fashion which was widely

followed by the friars in the wealthy cities, especially in Italy where the Franciscan churches frequently ranked amongst the most notable churches in a city ; as for instance is the case with Santa Croce in Florence. The grandeur of these churches, it has been remarked, bears witness to the wealth of the citizens at the time the churches were built ;[1] but one might well wish they had borne witness to the poverty loved by St. Francis rather than to the wealth which he condemned. The tendency to splendour and luxury in the churches of the Order called forth some stringent regulations in the General Chapters held by St. Bonaventure.[2] Yet even so the tendency was not altogether checked. Popular enthusiasm and clamour often prevailed over the capitular ordinances. In the same way the generosity of the people at times combined with a worldly ambition on the part of the friars to erect stately friaries quite out of keeping with the profession of Franciscan poverty. Nevertheless it is generally true that the friaries, even the larger friaries, were simple in design and more suggestive of poverty than wealth. Thus, Brewer has remarked of the English friars : " Their buildings to the very last retained their primitive squat, low, and meagre proportions ".[3] Certain it is that at the dissolution of the religious houses under Henry VIII, the Crown did not derive any large revenue from the Franciscan houses, and eloquent testimony is borne to the poverty of the friars by the royal commissioners. At Shrewsbury " the friars had three or four acres of arable land adjoining [the friary] and little personal property ; no jewels, nothing but a plated crucifix

[1] On this point *vide* Thode, op. cit., Vol. II, chap. I.

[2] Cf., e.g., the Constitutions of Narbonne in 1260, *Archivum Franc. Hist.*, An. III. fasc. 3.

[3] *Monumenta Franciscana*, I, XVII.–XVIII.

and a mean chalice". "At Aylesbury," wrote the royal commissioner, "I found them very poor and in debt, their ornaments very coarse and very little stuff of household."[1] A few of the churches of the English friars showed the tendency to sumptuousness already noted; for example at Reading, London, and York: but these, it would seem, were the exception. Nor is it only of the English friaries that this may be said. Whoever has traversed Franciscan Italy and kept an open eye for the ancient friaries still to be found there, will recognize a similar condition of things. Even the greater friaries are for the most part of marked simplicity, whilst the lesser friaries might well be described as "enlarged cottages"; and not a few in their narrowness and lack of comfort mark the severity of the reform movements.

Now the buildings in which men live are a very fair indication of their character and general mental outlook; above all, of their spiritual aspiration; ambitious men do not gather in wealth and continue to live in cottages.

The truth is that at no time did the Franciscan friars amass great wealth or large estates: even where they came to hold revenues it was comparatively on a small scale: and this points to the real tragedy of the party of relaxation, that they bartered away their spiritual idealism and liberty for such mean worldly returns and petty ambitions. They were too honest to throw over altogether the poverty which they professed, and yet not sufficiently honest to follow it straightly and with pure conviction. That, I suppose, is a common ailment in this world of men: and for that reason we shall look the more gratefully to the friars of the stricter observance who in spite of the common failing strove manfully and with some measure of success to keep

[1] Cf. Dugdale, *Monasticon*, "Grey Friars, Shrewsbury–Aylesbury".

to the more heroic ways. Certainly as one enters some of the existing ancient friaries, such for example as the friary at Carceri near Assisi built by St. Bernardine of Siena, one realizes the latent heroism which must have underlaid even the lives of the most commonplace brethren who dwelt there : and yet this friary is typical of many of the friaries built by the more fervent amongst the Franciscans in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

We pass now to the question of learning. Nothing is more clear in the history of St. Francis than that he looked with distrust upon the scholastic learning of his day, and set himself against its introduction into the fraternity. Eventually indeed he was persuaded to grant leave to St. Anthony of Padua to teach theology to the Brethren : yet even so it was with manifest misgiving.

Rightly, however, to appreciate the saint's intention it is necessary to distinguish between Intellectualism and that Thought which, as we have elsewhere seen, belongs properly to the Franciscan life. The one he certainly regarded as essentially opposed to the spirit of the fraternity ; the other he as certainly held in profound reverence. We have here the test by which to judge how far the Franciscan schoolmen really departed from the mind of their Founder.

Now among Franciscan schoolmen, three names at once suggest themselves as pre-eminent : St. Bonaventure, Duns Scotus and William of Occam, and they stand for three modes or schools of Thought which established themselves amongst the friars.

Of the three, St. Bonaventure is without doubt the purest and most genuine Franciscan thinker. He has been popularly styled " the Seraphic Doctor," as St. Francis is " the Seraphic Saint " ; and for the same reason, since in both

love is the moving passion.[1] St. Bonaventure was a master in the dialectical skill of the schools ; yet he remained always a mystic, a searcher after that truth of life which is apprehended by the heart rather than the logical reason. With him the affections governed the thought ; his mind was always searching for that which his heart desired : it was not so much the Truth which took his Thought captive. Hence to understand him, we must read his writings with the emotion of the heart more than the logical reason.[2] The direct relationship between St. Bonaventure's mind and the mind of St. Francis is thus at once apparent : yet St. Bonaventure was a genuine schoolman ; he was as much at home sitting at his writing-desk, as St. Francis was wandering in the woods ; the clerkly Latin was as much the proper language of the one in his passionate moods, as the tongue of the minstrels was of the other. Here then we find the genuine Franciscan temperament really entering into the dialectical speculation of the schools and bringing into them that " searching of the heart " by which St. Francis would have the Friar Minor seek his knowledge.

The truly Franciscan character of St. Bonaventure's mind is seen in his peculiar influence upon the religious world. It may be doubted whether any of the schoolmen had so direct and immediate an influence upon the devotional life of the Middle Ages as he had. His impassioned yet restrained piety was caught up both by scholars and by populace. It is noteworthy that several of his works were translated into English during the fourteenth century. He, moreover, set the fashion for a

[1] So Dante puts these words into Bonaventure's mouth : " L'Amor che mi fa bella " (*Paradiso*, Canto XII. 31).

[2] *Vide supra*, p. 80 *seq.*

whole school of popular devotional literature, such as the *Stimulus Amoris* by Fra Giacomino of Milan and the *Meditationes Vitæ Christi*, to which we shall have to refer farther on.

The second of the three leading Franciscan schoolmen was Duns Scotus. At first sight it is difficult to connect the Scotist school with the simplicity and directness of mind of the first Franciscans. The Scotists in their analytical subtlety seem to have wandered far from that mystical and poetical temperament which one expects in the Franciscan thinker. Of Scotus himself it has been said that "his extraordinary acuteness of mind" led him rather to criticize than to develop the work of the thirteenth century. "His subtlety, his desultory criticisms, and his abstruse style make him far more difficult reading than the earlier schoolmen." It is added "Scotus cannot be considered as the continuator of the old Franciscan school, but rather as the founder of a new school which rightly bears his name. His excessive realism has a tendency quite opposed to the Platonism of the early members of his order and indeed, agrees with Nominalism on many points. His stiff and dry style is very different from the ease and grace which charm us in St. Bonaventure."[1] Nevertheless the working of the Franciscan spirit is to be found in the Scotists, and especially in Scotus himself. The abstruseness of Scotus is due to the fact that he endeavoured to put into pure dialectic the essential mysticism of the Franciscan mind. It is this which gives to his arguments that note of subjectivism which stands out against the more objective reasoning of his Dominican rivals. Where he failed was in permitting his thought to be tyrannized over by his dialectical method

[1] Wilhelm and Scannell: *Catholic Theology*, Vol. I, Introduction, p. xxviii

and in succumbing to the acutely controversial temper of the later schoolmen : a temper not at all Franciscan. So far as Scotus's thought is constructive, he exhibits the true Franciscan thinker. His view, for example, on the question of the Incarnation was wholly in keeping with the traditional Franciscan mind, and there is an underlying human emotion at the basis of many of his arguments which is in keeping with the school of St. Bonaventure. Still in his excessively analytical method he undoubtedly departed from the purer line of Franciscan Thought and prepared the way for that third master-mind of Franciscan schoolmen, William Occam. In him and his followers scholasticism within the Franciscan Order altogether parted from the spirit of St. Francis, and developed further into pure rationalism. And it is to be noted that with his rationalism in philosophy William Occam combined a legalist and puritanical temper in practical life, utterly opposed to the joyous spirituality of the first Franciscan days. He was a zealot for the principle of poverty in opposition to Pope John XXII, yet was no friend to the " spiritual " Franciscans who were to preserve the primitive spirit. His conception of poverty was in fact more akin to that of the Waldenses than to the poverty of St. Francis : he was a stranger to the original idealism of the order and eventually degenerated into a political pamphleteer.

Now it is to be noticed that neither the Scotists nor the Nominalists ever really captured the mind of the Franciscan Order. Amongst the later Franciscan schoolmen the Scotists had a wide following. Outside the school, however, the earlier tradition of St. Bonaventure still held sway. This is more particularly true of the friars of the Reforms. It is noteworthy that the Capuchins in the sixteenth century expressly forbade their friars to follow Scotus and ordered

them to adhere to the tradition of St. Bonaventure.[1] But even in the fourteenth century this tradition was maintained, as is clear from the popular Franciscan literature of that time ; whilst in the fifteenth century it was revived in the writings of St. Bernardine of Siena and the Observants.

Some reference should perhaps be made here to the interest taken by the early English Franciscans in experimental Natural Science. The immediate relationship between experimental science and the devotional temper of mind exhibited in St. Francis, may not be at once apparent ; and in these days men are apt to regard the experimental scientist as temperamentally antagonistic to the theologian. As a matter of fact, however, the study of natural phenomena would seem to lie very close to the mystical temperament. It is in the facts of life that the true mystic seeks his knowledge, and to him phenomena are more eloquent than dialecticism. The mystical writers of the great Victorine school in the twelfth century, with whom the Franciscans had a spiritual affinity, certainly had a leaning towards the study of Nature.[2] At any rate the earlier tendency amongst the English Franciscans was to combine natural science with their study of theology.[3]

Adam Marsh, one of the most notable and pious of the early Franciscan schoolmen, seems to have considered a study of physical phenomena together with the text of Scripture and the Fathers as of more value than dialectical

[1] Cf. *La Scholastique et les Traditions Franciscaines*, par T. R. P. Prosper de Martigne, Paris, 1888.

[2] Cf. Hugo de S. Vict., *Tract. de Bestiis et aliis Rebus* (ed. Migne, Vol. 176). The treatise is a sort of mediaeval bestiary.

[3] According to Maxwell Lyle, Grosseteste's "interest in physical science seems to date from his connexion with the friars" (*History of the University of Oxford*, p. 30). Grosseteste was the first lecturer in the Franciscan school at Oxford.

speculation in the study of theology.[1] It would depend, of course, upon the purpose and temper of the student-friar. Pure rationalism can attach itself to natural science as readily as to dialectics. The interest of the Franciscan schoolmen in experimental science was, however, turned aside by the more popular enthusiasm for metaphysical speculation: hence whether it would have kept the later Franciscan schoolmen closer to the pure Franciscan mind in its directness and simplicity is a matter it would be futile to discuss here.[2]

[1] Cf. Roger Bacon, *Opus Majus*, ed. Bridges, I. p. 108; *Opus Tertium*, ed. Brewer, pp. 70, 75. Cf. Stevenson, *Life of Bishop Grosseteste*, p. 17 *seq.* Adam Marsh was Grosseteste's disciple and particular friend.

[2] According to Hilarin de Lucerne (*Histoire des Etudes*, p. 535) the supremacy of dialectics in later scholastic theology represents the triumph of the Paris school in the Order over the Oxford school.

V

We will now turn to the broader field of history, and see in what way the Franciscan friar influenced the world at large. For notwithstanding their keen interest in the work of the schools, the friars were always first and foremost workers amongst the people. Even in their schools, at least in the earlier days, the training was chiefly directed towards making the friars themselves more efficient preachers and counsellors in the world outside.[1]

Now the sum of a man's influence upon those with whom he comes in contact is a very fair test of a man's character ; and the same may be said of bodies of men.

It can hardly be denied that the friars, Franciscan as well as Dominican, brought into the mediaeval schools a directness and vigour of thought and a seriousness of purpose which had hitherto been lacking. They put life into the dry bones of legalist and sophist and directed the intellectual activity of the period to the solving of that most difficult problem, the harmony between Faith and Reason. The dialectical system had its defects which came out obtrusively in a later generation, when the fire of scholastic genius was dying down : but the work it had already achieved was of real value to the history of Christian Thought. What one notices particularly about the Franciscans was, as we have said, the tendency of their minds towards direct observation and positive knowledge of the

[1] Cf. Little, *Grey Friars in Oxford*, p. 61.

facts of life. St. Bonaventure is a typical instance in the sphere of theology; Roger Bacon in natural science. The one looked straight into the consciousness of the Christian soul; the other endeavoured to know nature as it is. Another tendency was to seek knowledge through the emotions as well as in the intellect: a tendency which manifests itself at times even in Duns Scotus. All this was for the good of Thought, making for directness and simplicity, and introducing into the atmosphere of the schools a certain human feeling which is the useful corrective of pedantry and vain conceits.

Outside the schools, however, the distinctive Franciscan traits were kept more intact even after the schoolmen had begun to stray from the purer tradition.

It is generally admitted by those who have given attention to the history of the friars, that the influence of the Franciscans upon the world at large was a humanizing influence. They intervened in politics chiefly as peacemakers between contending factions; they were the friends of the poor and the advocates of the oppressed; in their dealings with men they were as a rule genial and homely; in their spiritual ministrations they markedly fulfilled the evangelical purpose "to preach the Gospel to the poor, to heal the contrite of heart". They were men of wide human interests, and one of the most remarkable features in their history is their ubiquity. They were at home in the university and the court, in the castle and the cottage, amongst the merchants and dwellers in the city slums. "The mendicant brothers," says Gregorovius, "influenced every stratum of society. They thrust the secular clergy from the confessional and the pulpit; they filled the chairs of the university; were the greatest teachers of scholastic learning. . . . They sat in the college of cardinals and as popes

mounted the sacred chair. Their voices whispered to the conscience of the citizen in the inmost chamber of his dwelling and at the most sumptuous courts in the ears of the king, whose confessors and counsellors they were. Their accents resounded in the halls of the Lateran and in the stormy parliaments of the republics. They saw and heard everything."[1] But their influence was as elevating as it was wide. They not only intervened in the world's affairs, they created new ideals in the imagination of the people and turned men's energies in new directions.

They were, in the first place, the great peacemakers amidst the political turmoils and the wars of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Thus in England in 1233 Brother Agnellus, the Provincial Minister, was sent by the King to induce the Earl-Marshal, then in league with the Welsh, to submit to the sovereign and avert civil war. Brother Agnellus was unsuccessful owing chiefly to the fact that the Earl could not trust the King's word.[2] More fortunate in that same year was Brother Gerard of Modena, the genial and eloquent friar, who succeeded in putting an end to the feud which was dividing the republic of Parma into hostile camps. Gerard was one of the Alleluia preachers whose chief purpose was to put an end to civic feuds.[3] In 1241 the bishops of England chose certain friars to go as ambassadors to the Emperor Frederick II, with a view to arranging a peace between him and the Church. These are but a few of many such instances. Two facts, it is said, contributed to make the Franciscan friars useful on political embassies. They " often possessed the courtesy and charm of manner which is born of sympathy " ; and to this one writer

[1] *History of the City of Rome*, Book IV, chap. III.
[2] Eccleston, ed. Little, p. 95 ; Roger of Wendover, ad an. 1233.
[3] Salimbine, *M.G.H.S.*, XXXII. pp. 70, 75.

attributes their employment as diplomatic agents.[1] But to this must be added that wide knowledge of life, gained by constant intercourse with all sorts and conditions of men. One has to glance through the letters of Adam Marsh to learn how the friars gained their knowledge of the world.[2] There we find him corresponding with bishops about the spiritual and temporal management of their dioceses ; with Simon de Montfort about the affairs of the realm ; in one letter he intervenes on behalf of a poor woman against a tyrannous official of the Archbishop of Canterbury, in another he takes an interest in the affairs of a poor rector ; then he corresponds with various ladies concerning the state of their souls ; and again he intercedes with the superiors of his Order on behalf of a runaway friar. These are but a few of the subjects which engage his attention, but they reveal to us some of the sources of the friar's knowledge of men. In both matters he was a typical Franciscan. No finer thing is recorded of the early English friars than their sending back to the King, Henry III, a bale of cloth for the making of habits, which he had given them, but which he had taken from a hapless merchant without paying for it.[3] It is to be noted that it was the friars who, at the risk of losing the goodwill of nobles and people, pleaded for justice for the Jews in moments of popular uprisings against them.[4] In his sympathy with Simon de Montfort, too, Adam Marsh did but voice the feeling of the English friars as a body, for when the earl fell at Evesham the friars mourned for him as for a martyr.[5] Again in the following century, there is evidence that the friars were in

[1] Little, *Grey Friars*, p. 7.
[2] *Mon. Franc.*, I. p. 77 *seq*
[3] Matth. Paris, *Hist. Maj.*, Roll Series, v. p. 275.
[4] e.g. *ibid.*, p. 546.
[5] Cf. Little, *Grey Friars*, p. 33.

sympathy with the Peasants' Revolt though they denied having incited it.[1]

As in England, so was it elsewhere. Amongst the daring things attributed to St. Anthony of Padua was the bearding of Ezzelino de Romano, the tyrant of Padua[2]; when eventually Ezzelino fell before the onslaught of a popular rising, led by the Papal legate, the liberators were urged forward by an appeal from a Franciscan lay-brother, "a man of magnificent heart," as the friar who chronicled the deed says approvingly.[3] About the same time the famous Franciscan preacher, Bercthold of Ratisbon, was denouncing tyranny and injustice in Germany. On one occasion he refused an invitation to preach in a city because of the unjust taxes levied upon the citizens.[4] Nor are these exceptional cases; as anyone will know who will read the chronicles of the Order.

The same sympathy which made the friars so frequently the champions of those who were suffering at the hands of a lawless ruler or government, made them also the active friends of the poor in the hardships which follow poverty. The greatest benefit which the Franciscans conferred upon the poor was the ennobling of poverty in the eyes of the

[1] Cf. Stubbs, *Constitutional History*, III. 36. There are two curious instances in the reign of Edward III, of friars rescuing "felons" on their way to execution (*Cal. of Patent Rolls*, Edw. III, ad an. 1338, m. 17 and 1351, m. 10). Earlier in the reign of Henry III, they frequently intervened on behalf of those who fell under the law: e.g. cf. *Patent Rolls*, Hen. III, ad an. 1233, m. 6; an. 1258, m. 9.

[2] *Chron. XXIV Gen.*, in *Anal. Franc.*, III. p. 136. The story is legendary and unhistorical but it witnesses to the reputation of the friars as friends of the oppressed. Cf. *San Antonio di Padova*, by P. Niccolò dal-Gal, p. 274 (Quaracchi, 1907).

[3] Salimbine, loc. cit., pp. 395–397; cf. *Anal. Franc.*, III. p. 156.

[4] Cf. Wadding, *Annales*, ad an. 1272; cf. Holzapfel, *Manuale Historiæ*, p. 207.

more religious minds of the world. In embracing poverty St. Francis had given it a religious consecration which more than anything else tended to revolutionize the attitude of mind of the mediaeval world in regard to the poor. He had made men recognize in the poor man a likeness, through his poverty, to the Poor Christ, and thus by his teaching and life, poverty was "exalted on an altar and placed in the glory of heaven".[1] In this sense it may be said that the Franciscan friar was "the representative of the third estate, the great lower mass of the people in their combined upward striving towards a position self-sustained and independent".[2] To the Catholic, poverty could no longer be deemed a badge of human inferiority; and the poor man in his poverty was given a charter, sanctioned by religious Faith, upon which he could base his claim to human treatment and fellowship. The effect was seen in the increased effort to relieve the poor and to raise them out of their squalor, which resulted from the example of the friars. Brewer has thus stated his reading of the effect of the Franciscan friars upon the social condition of the Middle Ages: "St. Benedict, the founder of Western monkery, found a way of bringing together the rude, rough Goth and the polished Roman patrician on the common ground of manual labour. . . . Then came a second attempt in the founding of the military orders where the knightly spirit of Europe was drawn forth in all its strength and tenderness, by committing to the strong the care of the weak, to the soldier the protection of the widow and the orphan. Last and harder than all, came the experiment of St. Francis, to devote to the poor and neglected outcasts of the large towns of Europe, to the untended leper, the abandoned beggar, the sickly mechanic, to their wives and children, whatever

[1] Gregorovius, loc. cit. [2] Thode, op. cit., p. 243.

of piety and gentleness could be controlled to this purpose." Again he says: "If by the establishment of leper hospitals and a general improvement of the towns that terrible scourge [leprosy] has so completely disappeared that its very name is disarmed of all meaning, it was not so then [in the thirteenth century]. Mankind gained truer notions of it and of their duty towards those who were afflicted by it, but St. Francis set the example."[1] This is indeed an over-statement of the case as regard the lepers. There were leper-hospitals before St. Francis's day, and religious congregations, such as the Crucigeri, devoted to the care of the lepers. But undoubtedly St. Francis and his friars fostered the movement of pity and gave it a wider impetus. When in 1221 the lay penitents who adhered to the Franciscan fraternity were formed into an organized order, one of their first actions was to found a hospital in Florence, in which they themselves tended the sick-poor.[2] And throughout their long history the connexion of the friars with the hospitals has been maintained in Italy. Even to-day they are commonly found there, acting as chaplains to the hospitals and prisons. An interesting page, too, in the history of social reforms is the story of Bernardino da Feltre and his fellow-friars in the fifteenth century when they set out to rescue the Italian poor from the clutches of the usurers. To their efforts was due the institution of the *Monti di pietà*, or poor man's bank, whence loans might be obtained on merciful terms.[3]

The influence of the friars upon the popular conception of marriage and family life also deserves attention. Brewer

[1] *Mon. Franc.*, I, xxvi–xxviii.

[2] Wadding, *Annales*, ad an. 1221; Sbaralea, *Bull. Franc.*, II. p. 293.

[3] Cf. P. Ludovic di Besse, *Le B. Bernardine de Feltre*; Wadding, *Annales*, ad an. 140.

has noted the fact that the friars' influence tended to elevate the ideal of marriage at a time when the Manichæan heresy of the reforming sects had lowered the spiritual conception of the married state.[1] But it was not only the heretical sectaries who took a low view of marriage; the romantic literature of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries had frequently tended to exalt free love over conjugal love. But the Franciscan took the saner Catholic view. His teaching concerning the dignity of marriage was closely allied with his devotion to the Blessed Virgin which was so notable a feature in his life and preaching.[2] If on the one hand he exalted our Lady's virginity, on the other he set forth the glory of her motherhood, and whether in her virginity or in her motherhood, he saw in her the ideal of a pure womanhood. In his preaching every home was invested with something of the tender radiance which came from the sacred home at Nazareth. And so whilst in the track of the Franciscan preacher convents grew up in which women dedicated themselves to the religious life, at the same time the homes of the people were consecrated with a new glory; and the friars came to be regarded as the advocates of marriage and friends to true lovers. In this light Chaucer represents them in his satirical description of the friar in the *Canterbury Tales;* Shakespeare in *Romeo and Juliet;* and Manzoni in *I Promessi Sposi.*[3]

We have already noted the general sympathy of the friars with the people's liberties; but there was yet another way in which they did much to build up national life. Their

[1] *Mon. Franc.*, I, xxxix.

[2] Cf. Thode, op. cit., II. p. 185 *seq.*

[3] Elizabeth Paston took counsel with Friar Newton when she wished to escape from the tyrannical rule of her mother and get married. Cf. Paston Letters, quoted in Wright's *Domestic Manners of the Middle Ages*, p. 382.

preaching in the vulgar tongue must undoubtedly have helped on the movement towards the literary formation of national tongues which had begun with the romantic movement in the twelfth century. In Italy they contributed to the formation of the Italian language, not only by their sermons but also by their songs. Early in the fourteenth century Fra Giacomino da Verona produced in the people's tongue a long poem on the heavenly Jerusalem and the infernal Babylon, about the same time that Jacopone da Todi was sending forth his immortal *laudi*.[1]

Now all this is manifestly in keeping with the spirit of St. Francis, and goes to prove a continuance of his spirit in the friars who came after him. He himself was pre-eminently a peacemaker: time after time he intervened between rival civic factions and brought them to concord: his cry was "Pax" in an age when cities were constantly divided in themselves and at war with each other. His service of compassion for the lepers and his fellowship with the beggar set the example which his friars followed when

[1] Cf. Ozanam, *Poètes Franciscains*, chap. III.; Thode, op. cit., p. 124 *seq.* In transitional English, too, we have the *Luve Ron* of the Franciscan, Thomas of Hales; whilst the attribution of the romance, *Sir Guy of Warwick*, to Friar Walter of Exeter, and of the *Ludus Coventriæ* to the friars of Coventry may be due to some tradition connecting the friars with lyrical and dramatic art.

Friar William Herbert (thirteenth century) freely translated hymns into the English tongue. Cf. Little, *Grey Friars in Oxford*, p. 168; also T. Wright, *Reliquiæ Antiquæ*, Vols. I and II.

Friar Michael of Kildare (? Franciscan) wrote lyrical English poetry about the beginning of the fourteenth century. His poems (e.g. "Swet Jhesus, kind and free" in *Reliquiæ Antiquæ*, II, pp. 190–194) show great skill in the art of verse.

Another English friar, Richard Lederede, bishop of Ossory, wrote latin hymns to replace the secular songs in use amongst the clergy of his diocese. He wrote his hymns to the airs of the songs they were to replace. But his hymns are of poor poetical quality.

they came to the relief of the sick-poor and the helpless; in their ready defence of the oppressed and in their wide sympathetic interest in human affairs, we see in them a continuance of that deep human feeling with all the world, which makes St. Francis one of the most lovable of saints.

VI

But it was perhaps as preachers and as creators of a popular religious literature that the Franciscans who came after St. Francis most manifestly revealed their kinship with their founder.

To the Franciscan friars, more than to any other, must be attributed the achievement of bringing to the mass of the people the new fervour of religious devotion which already in the twelfth century was renovating the life of the cloister and introducing into liturgical worship a new dramatic beauty and warmth of feeling. The friars were in fact the purveyors of this new piety to the multitude ; they brought it out of the cloisters and the cathedrals into the homes of the people and into the life of the world at large : and for this, if for nothing else, the Christian world owes them a generous gratitude. In a sense this was their greatest historical achievement and that which has left its most permanent impression upon the Catholic mind in all subsequent time.

Two things conduced to the popularity of the Franciscan preachers : they invested the truths of religion with a language the people easily understood ; and they showed in their preaching an intimate knowledge of the actual life of the people. These two qualities gave to their sermons that note of actuality which is at all times necessary to the preacher who would win the allegiance of his audience.

We have already referred to the wide and intimate knowledge of the world shown in the letters of Adam Marsh. But that was common to the Franciscan preachers. From the sermons of Bercthold of Ratisbon, one might draw a fair picture of the social life of Germany in the thirteenth century. St. Bernardine of Siena displays an equally exact knowledge of the affairs of the people in Italy of his day. But the friars not only knew the details of common life ; they entered with sympathy into the feelings of the people and understood their spiritual needs and in their Catholic spirit did not hesitate to come out into the street and the market-place with those spiritual wares which it was their mission to bring to the multitudes.

Thus they were in a particular sense the creators of popular devotional services, as distinct from the liturgical service of the Church. It need hardly be said that these popular services were not meant to displace the liturgical service. They grew out of the preaching of the friars and were, so to speak, part of the sermon much in the same way as pious aspirations or ejaculatory prayers enter into books of meditation. The friar, either before he began his sermon, or during it or at its close, would call upon the people to unite in prayers appropriate to the theme upon which he was preaching. These prayers, like the sermon, would be in the people's tongue. In a word, the popular service was, in the broadest sense, a " mission service ". In these improvised services the friars made use of hymns in the vernacular[1] and also of spectacular representations of the Gospel similar to those which already were conjoined to the liturgical service at the Christmas and Easter festivals.

[1] Jacopone da Todi composed a series of vernacular hymns corresponding to the Sunday Gospels. Cf. Bini, *Rime e Prose del Buon seculo della lingua* (Lucca, 1852), pp. 71–113.

These spectacular representations by the friars were of the simplest sort. The earliest was the Crib at Greccio set up by St. Francis himself. Whether St. Francis took the idea from the "representation" of the Nativity already introduced into the Cathedral liturgy in the twelfth century, or whether the idea was his own, may be disputed;[1] but the Crib of Greccio was wholly Franciscan in its simplicity: it was a "popular" representation of the Christmas mystery, in a sense that cannot be applied to the quasi-liturgical representation. A stable was erected beside an altar in the open air and in the stable was the manger for the Divine Infant. After the Gospel of the Mass, Francis, standing beside the stable, preached on the mystery of the day, himself in some way acting the part of the Shepherds. To quote the description of the sermon left us by Thomas of Celano: "Then he preached to the people who stood around and uttered mellifluous words concerning the birth of the poor King and the little town of Bethlehem. And often, when he would name Christ Jesus, aglow with exceeding love, he would call Him the Child of Bethlehem, and uttering the word 'Bethlehem' in the manner of a sheep bleating, he filled his mouth with the sound, but even more his whole self with the sweet affection. Moreover, in naming 'the Child of Bethlehem' or 'Jesus,' he would, as it were, lick his lips, relishing with happy palate and swallowing the sweetness of that word."[2] Of such simple sort must have been the representations of the Passion frequently introduced by the friars into their sermons, from which were developed in the fourteenth century the popular "Good Friday Devotions," at which the various scenes of the Passion were represented somewhat in the manner of

[1] Cf. E. K. Chambers, *The Medieval Stage*, Vol. XI.

[2] I Celano, 86, Ferrers Howell's translation, p. 84.

a Miracle Play.[1] A survival of these representations as practised by the friars themselves is to be found in a common practice by the Franciscans in later centuries. The preacher at the close of the mission would himself carry on his shoulders a large cross to the hill-top on which the cross was then erected as a memorial of the mission: the procession to friar and people was a veritable journey to Calvary. The tradition found a more permanent utterance in the devotion of the Way of the Cross, which in the fourteenth century, if not earlier, became a feature in Franciscan churches.[2]

We have said that the singing of hymns in the vernacular entered largely into the apostolate of the friars. Again the tradition, as far as the Franciscans were concerned, began with Francis. The *Speculum Perfectionis* tells us that towards the end of his life the saint wished to send forth Fra Pacifico, the poet-laureate, with other friars, to go through the world preaching and singing the "Praises of the Lord". First they were to sing; then one of them was to preach. The "Praises of the Lord" in this case seems to have been the "Canticle of Brother Sun," for which St. Francis had himself arranged the melody. Thus were the Franciscans disposed by the example of their founder, to make their own those popular *laudi* or vernacular hymns which afterwards entered so deeply into the religious life of Umbria.

There is indeed an evident relationship between the preaching of the friars and the popular religious verse, both

[1] Thode is of opinion that the Franciscans inspired and collaborated in "representations" of the Passion and Resurrection, which took place in various towns in Italy in the thirteenth century (cf. op. cit., Vol. II, p. 142).

[2] Cf. Fr. Thurston, S.J., *The Stations of the Cross*, but reference in the *Legend* of St. Margaret of Cortona to the devotion as existing in the church of the friars at Cortona. St. Margaret died in 1297.

dramatic and lyrical, which entered so largely into the religious life of the people towards the close of the thirteenth century and came to luxuriant growth in the fourteenth century.

The dominant themes of the religious singers of this period are the love which should unite the Christian soul to Jesus Christ because of His love for us, especially as manifested in His Incarnation and Passion, and sorrow for man's forgetfulness of this redeeming love : but as pertaining to these higher themes, there are hymns on death and judgment.[1]

Now it is to be noted that these were the themes which the Franciscan preachers persistently discoursed upon. They were above all else the heralds of the Divine Love and Mercy which Jesus Christ brought mankind in His coming upon earth and of that penitent sorrow which purges the soul from sin. Generally speaking, they eschewed speculative questions of theology which they rightly left to the schools. Their purpose was strictly practical—to persuade men to cast off evil habits and to become Christians. To this end they based their appeal directly upon the religious faith which their hearers professed : and their main argument was the Gospel itself.

It has been said of St. Francis that he made the Gospel-story live again in the imagination and heart of the people, and that, too, may be said of the Franciscan preachers generally. They did not quote texts from the Gospels as mere pegs upon which to hang a theological or moral discussion. Their practice was to bring before the eyes of the people some incident of the Gospel ; to concentrate their hearers' attention upon it ; to make them drink in imagi-

[1] For instance cf. the Middle-English dramatic and lyrical religious poems published by the *Early English Text Society*.

natively and affectively the truth of life as the Gospel itself reveals it. In the presentment the Gospel-story became the centre of the whole Christian life ; and the people were made to realize how their own joys and sorrows, their good deeds and evil, all entered into the Christ-life upon which they were gazing. Bethlehem, Nazareth, the highways of Galilee and Judea, and Calvary thus became alive at once with a Divine meaning and with quick human interest. The Divine Babe of Bethlehem stirred the tenderest feelings of men's hearts, and gave them a nobler, more spiritual goal ; from the home-life of the Holy Family at Nazareth, a pure light radiated into the people's own homes, giving to them a new sanctity ; at the Cross of Calvary were gathered all the sorrows of life, into which was born a new hope and a beginning of joy. This effect of the friars' preaching is seen clearly in the art of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The *Nativities* and *Crucifixions* of the Italian painters of that period bear witness to the hold which the Gospel-story had upon the people's mind. These paintings are not historical representations : they were not meant to be so. In them the artists endeavour to depict the life of our Lord and the story of the Christian faith as realized by the people they knew. The shepherds and kings and neighbours who appear in a *Nativity* together with favourite saints are meant to express the world-significance of the Crib of Bethlehem in the manner in which the friars had taught the people to meditate upon our Lord's birth.

But the Gospel-story as set forth by the friars has not only a human interest in the narrowest sense of the term. Jesus Christ was King of the earth and not only of the human soul. When He walked upon the earth, all Nature confessed His Kingship. Hence with the Franciscan preachers Nature was symbolical of the higher spiritual life,

and their use of Nature-symbolism frequently displayed a real poetic sympathy; as when St. Bernardine of Siena, preaching on the text, *And His voice as the voice of many waters*, asks: "Were you ever at Venice? Sometimes a light breeze springs up there of an evening and blows on the waters, which make a sound; and that is the water's voice."[1]

Again the religious art of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries manifests the influence of the friars' preaching in those delightful landscapes which form the background of so many *Nativities* and in the dread sorrow of Nature which envelops the *Crucifixions*.

Next after the Gospels, a favourite Scriptural book with the Franciscans was the Apocalypse of St. John; from which they drew their meditations and sermons upon heaven and hell. Early in the fourteenth century Fra Giacomino of Verona wrote in his native dialect two long poems for the edification of the people—one upon the Heavenly City Jerusalem, the other upon the Infernal City Babylon. Fra Giacomino has the imaginative quality of the true poet. His intention as he tells us, is to set forth the teaching of Scripture concerning the "doings" (*aventure*) of the Holy City and the remorseless misery of the lost, "by means of examples and figures". But he admonishes the reader that the story has already been told by St. John. His description of heaven is delightful in its lyrical beauty. He sees it as a land of garden; a fair river runs through its midst and the air is filled with the scents of tree and flower; the rose and the violet "make a great perfume". In this garden-land virtue changes old age into youth; and of all

[1] Ferrers Howell, *S. Bernardino*, p. 289. See, too, *Saint Bernardine of Siena, Sermons*, translated by Helen Josephine Robins (Siena, Tipografia Sociale, 1920).

the company Christ is Captain and Lord. Great gladness reigns in the court of the High King, God, as though the sky and air and plains were full of strings emitting melody ; and from every voice comes forth the " Holy, Holy, Holy," lauding the majesty of the Blessed Trinity.[1]

In like manner in the sermons of Bercthold of Ratisbon, the heavenly city of the Apocalypse gleams with the fulfilled desire of the human heart, with renewed youth, unalloyed beauty, perfect love and the joy which knows no sadness. As Giacomino beholds in Christ " the high Flower of Spring " (*alta flor novella*), so with Bercthold, Christ " the young Lord " is the crown of the renewed youth of the heavenly life.[2]

All this is true to the mental outlook of St. Francis and to that spiritual buoyancy and poetic enthusiasm which is so uniquely characteristic of his religious faith ; and it shows how the spring-time of the spirit which he brought into the religion of the thirteenth century remained for long a heritage of his friars.

But if the friars could make the life of the Blessed attractive with beauty and vitality, they knew also how to bring home to men the dread hatefulness of sin as the harbinger

[1] One sees a trace of the Apocalyptic vision in Thomas of Hales's description of the " dwelling " of Christ in the *Luve Ron* (cf. Morris, *Old English Miscellany*, pp. 96–7). The poems of Fra Giacomino were published by Ozanam : *Documents inédits*, p. 291 *seq.* For a more critical version cf. Mussafia, *Comptes rendu de l'académie des Sciences de Berlin*, Vol. 46, p. 113 *seq.*

[2] Cf. Thode, op. cit., p. 117. Friar Bercthold's sermons were published at Vienna in 1862, by Pfeiffer and Stroble. A new edition of the sermons is being prepared by the Capuchin friars of Switzerland. Bercthold was undoubtedly one of the greatest and most typical of the Franciscan preachers of the thirteenth century. Salimbine says of him : " All who have heard him say that from the time of the Apostles until now there was not his like in the German tongue " (op. cit., p. 559). Roger Bacon speaks of him as the most powerful preacher of his time (*Opus Tert.*, p. 190).

of woe and misery ; as on the occasion when a woman of evil life was so terrified by a sermon of Bercthold of Ratisbon that she fell dead.

With the mysteries of man's future life was naturally connected their teaching on death. It has been pointed out that the friars' preaching had a distinct influence in the development of the *Allegories of Death* which were so prominent in the literature of the later Middle Ages, and that this influence is chiefly traceable in those allegories which treat of death as the "Mistress of Life."[1] In the earlier allegories the stress is laid upon the vanities of the world ; but in these later ones it is not so much the vanities that are dwelt upon, but the fact that men must die and that no man can escape death. Wherefore it behoves men so to live that death shall be to them a friend and not an avenger. This idea of death finds expression in St. Francis's "Canticle of Brother Sun" :

> Praise be to Thee, my Lord, for our sister,
> Bodily Death
> From whom no living man can escape :
> Woe is for those who live in mortal sin :
> Blessed are they who have treasured Thy holy will ;
> To them the second death[2] will bring no ill.

So too amongst the "Golden Sayings" of Brother Giles, we find this "saying" concerning death : "If one had lived from the beginning of the world until now and had continuously suffered evil during his whole life and presently should attain to all good, what harm would all the evil he hath suffered do him ? And if one should always have had every good from the beginning of the world until

[1] Thode, op. cit., p. 234 *seq.*

[2] "The second death," i.e., death of the body as distinct from the spiritual death incurred by mortal sin.

now and presently shall come to all evil, what would all the good he has had profit him ? "[1]

Death as thus conceived, enters into the scheme of life, not as a brooding shadow but as a *fact* in the frank recognition of which a man gains the wisdom to live well. There is in the conception nothing of the morbidity of the *Danses macabres*, a later development in which the Franciscans seem to have had little part.

We turn now to the popular religious literature of the friars which followed in the wake of the great preachers. This literature falls mainly into two classes : the one setting forth for the people's instruction the story of the Gospels ; the other concerned more directly with the training of the will and the affections in the ways of spiritual perfection. In both cases the writings are usually styled " meditations " as distinct from theological treatises ; since their purpose was to lead men to ponder upon the religious truths in which they already believed and to ponder upon them in the heart rather than with the logical reason. They aimed at a realization of the Christian life through the understanding of the affections.

Two works which obtained a very wide popularity in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries may be taken as typical of these two classes of Franciscan literature—namely, the *Meditationes Vitae Christi* and the *Stimulus Amoris*. Both works, it is true, were written in Latin, but they both quickly became the possession of the people at large through the use made of them by the preachers and by writers in the vernacular. Both, too, as we have already remarked, derive their inspiration from the mystical writings of St.

[1] The *Golden Sayings of Brother Giles*, p. 67. See also the highly dramatic description of death in St. Francis's " Letters to all the Faithful," in *Writings of St. Francis*, trans. by Fr. Paschal Robinson, p. 106.

Bonaventure: they were in fact frequently incorporated into the published collections of his works.

The *Meditationes Vitae Christi*[1] are a consecutive series of narratives of the life of our Lord. They follow closely the story of the Gospels, but it is evident that the author was acquainted with the apocryphal Gospels, and quite simply he fills in details which seemed to him to be in the natural order and "rightness" of things; yet he never lets his imagination wander far from the Gospel itself. The whole story is told with a simplicity and conviction which win the reader's heart. It is clear that to the writers of the *Meditationes* the Gospel-story is its own argument, capable of winning men by its own beauty and persuasiveness. He evidently delights, too, in all the human habiliments in which the Son of God appeared amongst men. To him the Gospel declares at once the mystery of the Divine Love and the nobility of human life itself when governed by the Divine law. At times he pauses to point out some practical lesson, or to train the reader's attention for the better understanding of the story; but the pause is momentary and he quickly reverts to the narrative. Above all he would have the reader worship the mystery he is telling. For instance, take his story of the Annunciation:—

"Then Almighty God called the archangel Gabriel and said to him: Go to our most beloved daughter Mary who is espoused to Joseph and is above all creatures the most dear to Us: and say to her that My Son has desired her

[1] An almost contemporary English metrical translation of the chapters of the *Meditationes Vitae Christi*, relating the Passion of our Lord was made by Robert Manning of Brunne. Cf. *Early English Text Society*, LX. A prose translation was made by Nicholas Love early in the fifteenth century, under the title: *The Mirrour of the Blessed Lyf of Jesu Crist*. Love's translation, edited by Lawrence F Powell, was published by the Clarendon Press, Oxford, in 1908.

comeliness and has chosen her to be His mother, and ask her to receive Him joyfully ; for through her I have decreed to work the salvation of the whole human race, and I will forget the injuries which have been done to me. . . . [*The author now admonishes the reader.*] Here you should imagine and behold God as best you can, considering that He is incorporeal. Regard Him as a great God sitting on a high throne, His countenance kindly, loving and paternal, as one willing to be reconciled or already reconciled, and uttering these words. And see Gabriel—with a smiling, glad face and with bended knees ; his countenance, which is timorous and respectful, inclined—attentively receiving the embassy of his Lord. [*Now follows the narrative.*] Thereupon Gabriel arose, joyful and glad and he flew from on high in human form. In a moment he was before the Virgin still lying on her couch.[1] Yet did he not fly so quickly but that his Lord forestalled him, and there he found the Holy Trinity which had come before Its ambassador. For thou must know that the most high work of the Incarnation was the work of the whole Trinity, although only the Person of the Son took flesh ; as when a man putting on a tunic is helped by two other men who stand on either side of him and hold up the sleeves of the tunic.

" Now therefore—and at this point observe well ; and as you stand in the presence of this fact, understand all that is said and done. . . . The faithful bridesman Gabriel having entered, said to the Virgin : Hail full of grace, the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou amongst women.

" But she, according to the words of the Gospel, was troubled at his speech, thinking of the novelty of such a salutation. For she was not accustomed to be thus saluted :

[1] The Annunciation is supposed by the author to take place " at daybreak "—" in prima luce ".

and in this salutation she heard herself commended on three counts. Wherefore the humble lady could not but be troubled: for she was saluted as being full of grace, as having the Lord with her, and as being blessed amongst women. And the humble cannot hear their own commendation without bashfulness and trouble of mind. She therefore was troubled in mind from a virtuous and righteous bashfulness. . . .

"Twice she heard the angel speak before she replied: for it is an abominable thing for a virgin to be too ready of speech. The angel, recognizing the cause of her hesitation, said: Fear not, Mary, and be not bashful at the praises which I have spoken to thee: for such is the truth. Not only art thou full of grace, but thou hast recovered and regained grace from God for all mankind: since thou shalt conceive and bear the Son of the most High, Who has chosen thee to be His mother; and He will save all who hope in Him. Then she replied, not as either accepting or rejecting the aforesaid praises, but as being wishful to be certain concerning the matter of her virginity, to wit, that she should not lose it, for of this she was much afraid. She asked the angel therefore: How shall this be done unto me," etc.

The narrative concludes by relating how at the moment of the Incarnation our Lady and the angel kneel down in adoration. Then Gabriel rises and bowing to the ground before our Lady, bids her farewell, and disappears and returns to heaven where the angels make high festival.

The other type of Franciscan devotional literature is, as we have said, the *Stimulus Amoris*.[1] It is a fourteenth-century compendium of practical piety as taught by the

[1] Edited in *Bibliotheca Franciscana Ascetica Medii Aevi*, Tom IV (Quaracchi, 1905).

Franciscans. The author was Fra Giacomino of Milan. He drew freely from the writings of St. Bonaventure as did most of the later writers of devotional Franciscan literature. The purpose of this treatise is to lead men to seek union with God as the true aim of religion. It first deals with the dangers and temptations which beset the God-seeking man ; next, it discusses the state of the soul as it enters into the life of contemplative prayer and certain dangers to be avoided. It insists upon meditation on the Sacred Humanity of Christ, and especially upon the Passion as a means to contemplative union, and finally treats of the transformation which takes place in the soul in its mystical union with God. Yet throughout it is practical, not speculative ; it is manifestly intended for the many, not the few.[1]

. . . . . .

Here we will conclude this brief outline of the story of the Franciscan friars during the troublous constructive period of the fraternity's development. Much has been left unnoticed which would necessarily enter into a detailed account of their doings. In particular no adequate account of the friars' history would leave untold their vast missionary enterprise amongst the heathen all through the period of which we have been speaking. But sufficient perhaps has been said to show that the Franciscan spirit was not lost amidst the struggles and changes which fell to the lot of the fraternity, as they fall to the lot of every organic society which has a part in the world's life. The perception of this truth is essential at once to a right reading of the story of

[1] The *Stimulus Amoris* above referred to must not be confused with the *Stimulus Divini Amoris* of which an English translation was made in the seventeenth century under the title : *The Goad of Divine Love*, and which was edited and modernised by W. A. Phillipson in 1907. This latter work is a much later adaptation of the fourteenth-century treatise.

the Franciscan friars and to an adequate understanding of those principles upon which the first Franciscans moulded their splendid idealism and heroic adventure. For if the test of the sublimity of an ideal is its capacity to produce heroes, the proof of its universality is in the power to leaven the life of the unheroic multitude. Throughout the whole period of Franciscan history with which we have been concerned, the heroic quality was in evidence, side by side with a great deal that was manifestly unheroic. A brave show might be made with lists of canonized saints and friars zealous for the pure ideal, and of preachers and workers in whom the primitive Franciscan spirit seems to be again incarnate, and of more hidden brethren concerning whom many *Fiorettis* might be written. Yet the full praise of St. Francis is not sung in the lauding of these his greater Brethren : it is complete only when we confess with gratitude the uplifting of the spirit which came into the lives of lesser men who travelled on lower plains yet with a recognition of the light above them. These too in their degree were sons of Francis and bearers of his message to the world.

ADAM MARSH: AN ENGLISH FRANCISCAN OF THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY

I

Of the English Franciscans whose names are accorded with honour in the chronicles of the thirteenth century, none gained a more widespread and affectionate esteem than did Adam Marsh. Roger Bacon ranked him with Bishop Grosseteste as two who were "perfect in wisdom, divine and human," and he intensifies the encomium by adding: "at no time were there many perfect in philosophy".[1] Other contemporary writers, such as Ralph Bocking and Trivet, bear witness to his learning and his uprightness of character.[2] Salimbene refers to him as "one of the great churchmen of the world," and speaks enthusiastically of his commentary on the Book of Genesis.[3]

But it was Robert Grosseteste, his most intimate acquaintance, who wrote of Adam Marsh that he was "a truthful friend, a faithful councellor; one who looks upon the truth and not on mere appearances; who rests upon a firm and solid foundation, not on a hollow and fragile reed."[4] In those words Grosseteste has pithily depicted the man as we see him in the voluminous correspondence which is all we

[1] *Opus Tertium*, in Brewer *Opera Inedita*, p. 75; p. 70.

[2] Cf. Ralph Bocking, *Vita S. Ricardi*, in *Acta SS.* (Paris, 1865), Aprilis, I, p. 282; Trivet, *Annales*, ad an. 1253.

[3] *M.G.H. Scriptores*, Tom. XXXIII, pp. 234, 296.

[4] *Epist. R. Grosseteste*, no. 20, ed. Luard, p. 69.

have at present of Adam Marsh's writings.[1] From these letters mainly we gather our knowledge of the man and of the influence he wielded over the leaders and men of the nation in his day. The chroniclers, as we have noticed, speak of his great learning, and he is said to have written several works. His books are lost but these letters remain. Perhaps it was not mere fortuitous chance which preserved the letters, but the instinct of some collector with an eye to the personality of men. The letters tell us a great deal more than what manner of man Adam Marsh himself was : they throw an intimately revealing light upon the history of the period in which they were written. He who wrote them is, in fact, one of those men whose stories can be told only in the telling of the history of a people. To know him you must enter into the stirring events which brought into historic relief the heroic figures of Robert Grosseteste, the great Bishop of Lincoln, and Simon de Montfort ; you must make journeys with him to the council-meetings of Church and the nation ; go with him on ecclesiastical visitations and rush off to meet the trusted leaders of the nation when they come together to discuss in private conclave some policy for the national welfare. At times, too, you must pause to give hearing to the pleas of people of no social account, poor folk in their distress apply to the busy friar for sympathy or help. Or again you must accompany him when he is sent to make peace between private parties who are at loggerheads with each other to the disturbance of the public peace. But as you follow him amidst his many activities you will learn how true was Grosseteste's estimate of his character. Those letters of his, in which he tells of

[1] *Epistolæ Adæ de Marisco*, edited by Brewer in *Mon. Franc.*, Vol. I (Roll Series)—Brewer's edition leaves much to be desired. In particular, no attempt is made to determine the dates of the letters.

his labours and reveals his mind, are the letters of a man of sterling honesty and unshakable loyalty with an eye to the larger and fundamental issues of the life around him, yet one who finds no human need too small to command his active sympathy : a large-hearted, far-seeing man, and an indefatigable worker : above all a man gifted with the very genius of friendship. And yet amidst all his activities for the public good and for individuals, he retains to the end the soul of the student and contemplative with an essential detachment from the mere external contingencies of life. That perhaps was the secret of his calm strength and clear vision which Grosseteste found so helpful.

We know but little of the earlier years of Adam Marsh previous to the time when he comes before us as the cherished counsellor of Robert Grosseteste : yet what we know is indicative of the man of later years.

At the time he entered the Franciscan Order, either at the end of 1232 or in 1233,[1] he was a resident Master of Arts in the University of Oxford, and a man of mature years.[2] He was, moreover, a man of means : not one of your poor scholars, but one who was able to maintain a well-appointed household.[3] Richard Marsh, the Bishop of

[1] He was evidently not a friar when Grosseteste wrote to him about the beginning of November, 1232, for in that letter he is addressed as *Magister* Ada—and I know of no case in which a friar is thus addressed. Later Grosseteste probably addressed him as *Frater*. He was certainly a friar before the entrance into the Order of John of Reading, Abbot of Osney, in 1235. (Cf. Eccleston : *De Adventu Minorum*, ed. Little, p. 24.) It would seem from Eccleston that Adam Marsh entered the Order shortly after the departure of Adam of Oxford for the East towards the end of 1232. (Cf. Eccleston, op. cit., pp. 22–23—vide *Epist. R. Grosseteste*, 2, loc. cit., pp. 17–21.) As Grosseteste was still archdeacon of Leicester when this letter was written, it cannot be later than November, 1232.

[2] Matthew of Paris (*Chron. Maj.* ed. Luard (Roll Series), Vol. V, p. 619) says Adam was " senex et litteratus " when he entered the order.

[3] *Ibid.* Cf. Eccleston, op. cit., p. 22.

Durham, was his uncle. Adam himself might well have looked forward to preferment in the Church ; but he seems to have had scruples upon this point. The rich benefice of Wearmouth which his uncle the bishop conferred on him, he resigned at the end of three years[1] ; though he does not seem to have refused the legacy of his uncle's library when that prelate died in 1226.

His entrance into the Order was not without that touch of romance which so frequently enters into Franciscan story. He had in his household an intimate friend, Master Adam of Oxford.[2] He, too, was a Master of Arts and a deeply religious man with something of a mystic's temperament and a heart attuned to chivalry. Already he felt a discontent with academic work and was aspiring to be a missionary amongst the infidels,[3] when he came unexpectedly into converse with a company of Franciscans. One of them, William of Colville the elder, "a man of great simplicity and exceeding charity," straightway put this request : "Beloved Master, for the love of the Mother of God, enter our Order and raise up our simplicity." Now Adam of Oxford had bound himself by vow never to refuse any request made to him in the name of the Blessed Virgin. He took the words as coming from her own lips and "to the great edification of the clergy" became a friar. His entrance into the Franciscan Order evidently made an impression on Adam Marsh, nor was his friend backward in urging him to take the same step as himself. But Adam Marsh was not one to act without due consideration. He

[1] *Lanercost Chronicle*, ad an. 1253.

[2] In the Philipp's MS. he is styled Adam of Exeter (*de Exonia*). This is the reading adopted by Mr. A. G. Little in his edition of Eccleston chronicle. But in the York MS. of this chronicle and in Grosseteste's letter, No. 2, referred to above, we find *de Oxonia*.

[3] Cf. *Epist. R. Grosseteste*, ut supra.

was still hesitating when he had a dream. He dreamed that he and his friend came to a castle above the gates of which was an image of the Crucified which all must kiss who would pass through the gates. Adam of Oxford at once kissed the crucifix and passed through the gates, and making for the stairway in the tower, he ran up swiftly and was soon out of sight. Adam Marsh, following, cried out: "Not so swiftly; not so swiftly; but never again was the other seen."[1] The English chronicler who knew the ending of the other Adam's story, saw in this a fulfilment of the dream. For Adam of Oxford towards the end of 1232 went to Rome to join a band of missionaries sailing for the East. He never reached his destination, but fell sick and died on the way to Barletta.[2]

It was characteristic of Adam Marsh and of the thoroughness with which he did what he put his hand to, that he sought entrance into the Order, not at Oxford where he was well known, but at Worcester. The Worcester Friary was particularly poor and mean; the building was chiefly of lath and mud. Moreover, the brethren in the custody of Worcester were particularly noted for their simplicity: great-hearted men, but with little learning.[3] Amongst these friars Adam Marsh took the Franciscan habit, as the chronicler tells us, "because of his zealous love of poverty". How soon after this Adam Marsh returned to Oxford we do not know. One report has it that he studied Theology for a time at Vercelli under the abbot of San Andrea, Thomas Gallo, a master in mystical theology.[4] At a later period he

[1] Eccleston, op. cit., pp. 21–22.

[2] He was probably one of the missionaries sent by Gregory IX in the spring of 1233 to preach to the Saracens. Cf. Sbaralea, *Bullarium Franciscanum*, Vol. I.

[3] Eccleston, op. cit., p. 45.

[4] *Vide Chronica XXIV Generalium* in *Analecta Franciscana*, Tom. III, p. 130. The story as told there is altogether unlikely. Gallo became

did indeed correspond with the abbot,[1] but of his sojourn at Vercelli there is no authentic record. It is far more probable that after a short stay amongst the friars at Worcester he was called back to Oxford to study theology under Robert Grosseteste who was then lecturing in the Franciscan school.[2]

But of Adam Marsh's story in these earlier years we must need be content with meagre details.

abbot in 1226 several years after St. Anthony of Padua was appointed to teach theology at Bologna: and St. Anthony was dead before Adam Marsh entered the Order.

[1] *Epist. Adæ de M.*, no. 88, loc. cit., pp. 206–207.

[2] Adam Marsh had evidently taken his doctorate in theology in 1244 when he went with Grosseteste to Lyons. If he entered on the study of theology in 1233, he would then have completed the eleven years of study required for the doctor's degree.

II

In the Oxford friary Adam Marsh would again find himself amongst men of his own kind—students and masters who had come into the Order from the university; and though he had in the simplicity of his renunciation sought out the company of the unlettered brethren in Worcester, yet assuredly his superiors did wisely in bringing his moral influence as well as his scholarship into their nascent school at Oxford. If the friars must have a school and be trained in theological study, it was men like Adam Marsh who would show them how to combine study with the simplicity and poverty of their vocation. Not that the Oxford friary was in any immediate danger of setting their new learning against either the simplicity or poverty proper to their Order. The story told of the two Oxford friars who went forth one Christmas day "to sow the saving seed of the Lord" reveals the true spirit of primitive Franciscans. Passing through a neighbouring wood, "picking their way along the rugged path and over the frozen mud and rigid snow, whilst the blood lay in the track of their naked feet," the younger friar thundered forth a *Salve Regina misericordiae* to beguile the tedium of the journey and keep up the drooping spirit of his companion. "Brother," said he when the anthem was finished, "Brother, was not that anthem well sung?"[1] A merry-hearted community they seem to have been, according to the chronicler: "At all

[1] *Chron. of Lanercost.* p. 31.

times were the brethren so merry and joyous amongst themselves that scarcely could they refrain from laughter, did they come face to face with each other. Wherefore because the young brethren at Oxford would laugh far too frequently, it was commanded to one of them that he should receive the discipline as often as he laughed in choir or at table. Now it happened that one day he had received the discipline eleven times and yet could not prevent himself from laughing. But one night he dreamed that the whole community were as usual in choir and as usual the brethren were tempted to laugh, when behold, the crucifix which stood above the door of the choir turned towards them as though it were living and said : " They are the sons of Core who laugh and sleep at the hour of the Cross." It also seemed to him that the crucifix endeavoured to withdraw its hands from the cross, as wishing to come down and go away ; but the custos of the place went at once up and made the nails fast, so that it did not come down. When this dream was made known the brethren were terrified and became more serious and behaved without over-much laughter.[1]

The moving spirit in the community was doubtless the Minister-Provincial, Agnellus of Pisa, who, it is said, had received the habit from the hands of St. Francis. He was a friar after the heart of the Seraphic Founder, gentle and zealous, a lover of poverty and an untiring worker for the spiritual welfare of his fellow-men. He died some years later, in 1235 or 1236, of a disease contracted on a long winter journey undertaken to bring a reconciliation between the King and William Marshall, the Earl of Pembroke. Whilst he lived he endeavoured to mould the English friars in the high idealism of their original vocation and to main-

[1] Eccleston, op. cit., p. 32.

tain the primitive simplicity. Yet it was he who established the Oxford school. Himself a simple man who believed more in prayer than in academic study, he nevertheless from almost the first coming of the friars to Oxford sent them to attend the lectures in the divinity schools.[1] Many of these friars had already taken the degree of Bachelor of Arts in the university.[2] The influx of these novices from the schools had necessitated the migrating of the friars to a larger house made over to their use by the burgher Richard the Miller in 1225, the year after the first coming of the friars to Oxford; and within another two or three years, as their numbers continued to grow, they had to beg for the use of an adjoining house. The friary, however, was of the meanest description. The infirmary, for instance, was so low "that the height of the walls did not much exceed the height of a man,[3] and there was no guest-room.[3] Not until 1236 did they build a church; and there might be seen two friars, one who had been bishop of Hereford, and the other abbot of Osney, carrying bricks and mortar for the building.[4] And as they were poor in their house, so were the Oxford friars in their clothing, clad as they were in patched habits, russet-brown or grey, of the poorest quality.[5] They went barefooted, without even sandals, nor, for some time, did they use pillows at night.[6]

It was about 1230, six years after their first settlement to the town, that the friars established a school of theology

[1] Eccleston, op. cit., p. 33.

[2] In 1225 "many bachelors and noblemen" were received into the friary. Eccleston, op. cit., p. 12.

[3] Eccleston, op. cit., p. 55.

[4] Cf. *Chrons. XXIV Gen.* in *Anal. Franc.*, III, p. 24.

[5] In 1239 Henry III gave them russet cloth and grey cloth for their habits. The cloth was of poor quality evidently, since it cost less than the ordinary price.

[6] Eccleston, op. cit., p. 43.

in their friary. Probably the coming to England of Haymo of Faversham and other Franciscan lecturers from the university of Paris, due to the dispersion of that university in 1229, had something to do with the matter. But behind these graduate friars was the forceful personality of Robert Grosseteste, Oxford's first Chancellor, or, as he was then styled, Master of the Schools. He was a fervent admirer of the friars. His simple piety and his entire sympathy with their ideals would win at once the respect and gratitude of such a man as the Blessed Agnellus ; whilst his position in the university would give singular weight to his advice. He had no doubt in his own mind as to the necessity of the friars being trained in theology if their ministry was to bear its full fruit, or even if they were to maintain themselves in their primitive fervour and spirituality. He was one of those who held that the education of the mind in spiritual science tended to reinforce the spiritual vigour of the heart. In fact, he warned the friars that " unless they fostered study and gave themselves diligently to the study of the Scriptures, they would assuredly fall into the ways of other religious who walked in darkness ".[1] So it came about that a theological study was formed, and at the invitation of Brother Agnellus, Grosseteste became the first lecturer in the Franciscan school. Under his presiding genius the school became in fact something more than a mere school of theology : for some years at least it was one of the centres of that reforming spirit which swept through England like a cleansing fire in the latter half of the reign of Henry III and made of the English people a new nation, albeit through much travail and suffering. To Robert Grosseteste himself his direction of the Franciscan school may have seemed the symbol of the alliance of the Franciscans with the gathering

[1] Eccleston, op. cit., p. 20.

forces of ecclesiastical and national reform. He undoubtedly used the opportunity thus given him to direct the enthusiasm of his pupils towards the practical problems of the day with which his own mind was deeply concerned; so that when a few years later he became the leader and spokesman of the reform party within the Church, he had already at hand a body of men upon whose sympathies and courage he could rely to assist him in the good cause. Many of those who now sat under him in the Franciscan school had already been associated with him in the university: for the opening of the school was followed by the influx of many of the Masters into the Order.[1]

Such was the Oxford Friary to which Adam Marsh came either immediately after putting on the Franciscan habit or not very long after, and which was to be his home throughout the remainder of his life.

It was a fitting background for such a man as he; and nowhere else perhaps could his intellectual and moral abilities have been called forth to better purpose. The Oxford Franciscans may have been of glad and lightsome heart; but behind their laughter was the rigour of a life embraced with a fervent religious enthusiasm and an earnestness for sacred studies which was to make their school for long the nursery of the most famous schoolmen of their order. But it was no enclosed nursery: in its walls the currents of thought which were making for a new moral and religious life in the land flowed in and out with a tense life and vigour. It was a time when the nation was awakening to mystic visions of a new heaven and a new earth. The religious revival of the twelfth century; the new enthusiasm for learning, the dawning sense of nationhood, had produced a spirit of vital unrest eager to translate its visions

[1] Eccleston, op. cit., p. 20.

into positive realities. Nowhere was this spirit more vital than in the university life at Oxford, and in Oxford nowhere were its pressing questions more seriously taken than in the Franciscan friary. That is what made the friary count as it did in the national life of the middle thirteenth century. And if Adam Marsh stands out as the most notable figure of this period of the Oxford Franciscans, it is not as a solitary figure as was, to some extent, Roger Bacon at a later period, but as one who in his enthusiasms and many labours had with him the sympathy and admiration of those amongst whom he lived. True in later years we find him in protest against certain tendencies amongst the English brethren which he deplored as evidences of a waning spirituality; yet even in this he spoke the opinion of many who like himself clung to the simpler and more spiritual idealism of the early days: even then he did not stand alone.

One would like to be able to follow Adam Marsh in his early life as a friar when the Franciscan school was growing under the fostering care of Robert Grosseteste and under the spiritual influence of the Blessed Agnellus and his saintly successor in the office of Provincial Minister, Albert of Pisa. A letter of Grosseteste written not long after his elevation to the episcopate in 1235, thanking Adam Marsh for his advice[1] and two of Adam's own letters, written to the Provincial of Paris, asking him to allow a friar-student to study in England,[2] shows us the man we know from his later history—the trusted councillor and the friend in need. Apart from this, during the first eleven years that Adam wore the Franciscan habit, he does but once emerge into the light of history. But that event is significant.

[1] *Epist. R. Grosseteste*, 20; loc. cit., p. 69.

[2] *Epist. Adæ*, 214, 215, loc. cit., pp. 378–380. The Provincial, Gregory of Naples, was deposed by Haymo of Faversham in 1240. (Cf. Eccleston, op. cit., p. 36.)

In 1241 a Chapter of the Order assembled at Montpellier ordered that all the Provinces should appoint commissions to consider the points in the Rule of the Order which were open to doubtful interpretations and to send to the Minister-General their considered opinions on these points with a view to an authoritative interpretation of the Rule. The Order had but just emerged from a time of stress and storm. The arbitrary government of Brother Elias had gone far to disrupt the moral unity of the Order. His own manner of life and his disregard for the first principle of the Franciscan rule, its principle of most high poverty, had shocked the consciences of the more observant friars, whilst his autocratic attempt to mould the Order into servile obedience to his own will by a system of inquisitorial visitors armed with most arbitrary powers, had brought confusion and distrust into the life and government of the Order. In 1238, the visitation of the English Province by the German Wigerius, a "Visitor a latere" from Elias, had thrown the English Province into such a state of perturbation that a Provincial Chapter assembled at Oxford and unanimously appealed against the General.[1] It was probably in support of this appeal that Bishop Grosseteste that same year wrote to the Pope and the Cardinal Protector of the Order, extolling the English friars for the good example of their lives and the marvellous effect of their preaching upon the people.[2]

In 1239 Elias was deposed, mainly it would seem at the intervention of Haymo of Faversham, the English Provincial, who now was elected Minister-General. The first act of Haymo was an endeavour to restore the confidence of the friars and by an act of renunciation to guard against a recurrence of the mischievous autocracy at which Elias

[1] Eccleston, op. cit., p. 38.

[2] *Epist. R. Grosseteste*, 58, 59; loc. cit., p. 179–181.

had aimed. To that end he induced the General Chapter to restrict the powers of the Minister-General by the institution of a Chapter of Definitors,[1] to whom it would belong to determine doubtful points of the Rule and, it would seem, to act as a sort of Court of Appeal. This Chapter of Definitors assembled at Montpellier in 1241. This first assembling—which Eccleston says was also the last, "on account of the insolence of the Definitors"[2]—was marred by much the same spirit which had made the government of Elias so odious; for the Definitors refused to admit the Provincials or even the General himself to their discussions. So high-handed, in fact, was their behaviour that the next General Chapter abolished the Definitorial Chapter. It was not an auspicious beginning of a policy of appeasement.

At this point it is that Adam Marsh comes to the front in the history of the English Franciscans. He together with others were elected to set forth the opinions of the English Province. Quite evidently the English friars viewed this attempt at an interpretation of the Rule with distrust and suspicion as an attempt to tamper with the pure spirit of the Franciscan vocation. "On the very night" (that the commission was appointed), Eccleston tells us, "Saint Francis appeared to Brother John Bannister and showed him a deep well: and when Brother John asked him: 'Father, behold the Fathers want to expound the Rule; do thou rather expound it to us,' the Saint replied: 'Son, go to the lay brothers and they will expound the Rule to thee.'"[3]

Eccleston implies that Brother John Bannister's fears

[1] The idea of the Chapter of Definitors was borrowed from the constitutions of the Dominicians.

[2] According to the *Chronica XXIV Gen.* a second Chapter of Definitors was held in 1243.

[3] Eccleston, op. cit., p. 89.

were shared by Adam Marsh and his associates; and because of this when they sent in their report on the doubtful points in the Rule, they embodied a passionate plea, beseeching the Minister-General "by the shedding of the blood of Jesus Christ, to allow the Rule to stand as it was delivered by Saint Francis at the dictation of the Holy Spirit." "This declaration," he adds, "greatly pleased the Cardinal Protector of the Order and the brethren beyond the seas; and confirmed the testimony given by Brother Albert concerning the English."[1] Whether it was that the Chapter of Definitors had already become discredited or that Haymo of Faversham saw it was impossible to issue an authoritative Exposition of the Rule which would be acceptable to the whole Order, no result came of the ordinance of Montpellier. The legacy left by Elias still distracted the Order in Italy and added a bitterness of feeling to the already existing divisions amongst the Italian friars.

It is indeed noteworthy that in this first trial of strength between the stricter party in the Order and the laxer, the most strenuous advocates for the simple observance of the Rule of St. Francis, should be from the schools of Paris and Oxford. Not at this time could it be said: "Paris, Paris, thou hast destroyed the Order of St. Francis!"

There can be little doubt that the passionate plea of the English friars, whilst it voiced the common sentiment felt by them all, was uttered or written by Adam himself. Some few years later we find an almost identical utterance of his when the crisis had further developed between the two parties in the Order. Much had happened in the meantime

[1] Eccleston, *ibid.* Probably by "the brethren beyond the seas," Eccleston means the French Province, whose report, *Declaratio IV Magistrorum*, showed a similar feeling. Cf. *Firmamenta trium Ordinum*, Part IV, fol. 17b. It is interesting to note that two of the four masters were Englishmen, Alexander of Hales and Richard of Cornwall,

to sadden and depress the brethren sensitive to aught that might dim the purity of their original vocation. But the greatest sorrow came when in 1245 Innocent IV allowed the "spiritual friends" of the friars to collect money for the use of the friars, not only in cases of urgent necessity but for all ordinary necessities[1]; and when again the same Pope in 1247 acknowledged these "spiritual friends" as legal representatives and agents of the friars.[2] To the more observant friars these concessions meant little less than a legal fiction covering the right of ownership and consequently a repudiation of that corporate poverty in which the Order was founded. To them it seemed a virtual disestablishment of the Franciscan Order as created by St. Francis. So strong was this feeling amongst the English friars that they refused to accept these concessions; and in the General Chapter of Genoa in 1251, William of Nottingham, the English Provincial, with his companion, Brother Gregory of Bossells, "in the face of almost the whole General Chapter, happily brought about that the privilege granted by the Lord Pope about receiving money through proctors be entirely annulled and that the interpretation of the Rule by Pope Innocent, in so far as it was laxer than that of Pope Gregory, should be suspended." Eccleston notes that in this Chapter John de Kethene, the Provincial of Ireland, stoutly stood by the English friars.[3] It was probably in a moment of deep depression occasioned by the issue of Pope Innocent's decrees that Adam wrote to a fellow-friar a letter of foreboding and unutterable sadness. He had been present at a Chapter of the brethren in London where evidently he had found himself in the company of men of like mind to himself: it was a Chapter,

[1] Cf. *Bullarium Franciscanum*, I, p. 400.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 487. [3] Eccleston, op. cit., p. 52.

probably, called to consider the attitude to be taken by the Province in face of the new relaxations. Adam had found in the assembled brethren a comfort of spirit, and only on his departure did the full bitterness of his sorrow come upon him. He writes: "When I left the assembly of these desirable brethren I entered into the bitter brackishness of a great loneliness and anxious sorrow took such entire possession of me that I lay between hope and a crushing despair. . . . When the Kingdom of Cupidity rages with an unbridled madness and the Kingdom of Charity is enchained with most mournful calamity, he only does not bewail with tearful thoughts, whom the God of this world has blinded or he who, like Balaam's ass, falls with his eyes opened, since before his eyes only, alas, passes the dire, unheard-of spectacle of wrong-doing. For an atrocious violence lays low the honour of purity, the mist of falsehood casts into shadow the fairness of light, the lust of pleasure beats down the love of sanctity." Here, it would seem, Adam is pondering on the general demoralization of the Kingdom. But what of the Order? Will not the whole Church militant—"the novitiate of the heavenly Court"—suffer if this "glorious profession which for the saving of a failing faith in the dangerous time of these last days, and to the wonder of the whole world, it has so mightily raised up, so wisely honoured and healthily increased . . . if I say, this profession, even against its will, be compelled more ambitiously to look for vain honours, more eagerly to wait upon the fleeting goods of this world, and to its greater disgrace to be intent upon foul pleasures. . . . Without any doubt I take it that the Holy Spirit vehemently inflamed the pious souls of our brethren residing in London with an ardent desire for the protection they profess, for which may the Son of God be for ever blessed. Wherefore I beseech your

reverencies' charity by the contemplation of your salvation, I ask you for the honour of the most Blessed Virgin, I adjure you by the wood of the life-giving Cross ruddy with our Saviour's blood, that you labour in every way you can with indefatigable diligence to the end that to the glory of the Divine Name, for our own salvation and the edification of the whole world the most pious father, our Minister, shall in no way consent to alter that to-be-beloved rule of life."[1]

The Minister here referred to is William of Nottingham, for whom, as is evident from his letters, Adam had a deep respect. He was a sagacious and far-seeing ruler and a man who manifestly had the power of attaching others to him, for he was several times re-elected Provincial Minister and governed the Province for fourteen years. He it was who developed the educational system of the English Province and instituted a lectureship of theology in most of the houses of the friars : so that before his death, " there were thirty lecturers in England who solemnly disputed and three or four who lectured without disputation."[2] Under him, too, the number of the friars and of their houses greatly increased. Yet he was fully aware of the dangers which beset the Order on the one hand from a worldly ambition, and on the other from an unprogressive rigidity. " It is well," he would say, " to make the houses of the brethren somewhat large lest those who come after make them over large."[3] Nevertheless he would allow no unnecessary

[1] *Epist. Adæ*, loc. cit., p. 407. This letter, I am inclined to think, is really two letters or three. If the part beginning " Cum semotus " be a continuation of the proceeding paragraph, it would seem from a reference to the Chapter of London to be written in 1241. A Chapter was held in London that year. (Close Rolls, 25, Hen. III). But internal evidence of the letter beginning " Cum semotus " almost certainly indicates a later period in the crisis concerning the Rule.

[2] Eccleston, op. cit., p. 63. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 57.

embellishment in the buildings at variance with the primitive simplicity. He deemed the roof of the church in London too extravagant and caused it to be removed ; he had the stone walls in the dormitory of the house at Shrewsbury taken away and replaced by walls of mud.[1] "We must," he said, "consider the mind of St. Francis and his intention in the Rule, otherwise superfluities will grow in the Order, just as hairs grow in the beard, unnoticed."[2] The English Province had, in fact, been governed by a succession of Provincial Ministers who were zealous to maintain the primitive simplicity and poverty of the Franciscan Rule. In spite of this, however, the warning of William of Nottingham was not unnecessary. The popularity of the friars was leading them to enlarge their buildings, and there was a growing tendency to mingle in secular affairs which was not justified by their spiritual ministry. The younger generation were beginning to lose their high spirituality and love of austere poverty which had marked the earlier generation.

Adam Marsh, writing to William of Nottingham probably somewhere about 1250, bewails these relaxations and attributes them to the laxer discipline in the training of the young friars. "I see," he writes, "in danger of ruin, the whole structure of that sublime edifice divinely built up by a dispensation which all ages will regard as stupendous : the more especially since from its very foundations it is not so much neglected through foolishness as deliberately dissipated. Even the novices—their proper rigour and striking capabilities and fervour of devotion seem to be in no way cared for. Notwithstanding the weakness of their age, the heat of their youth, and their inexperience—these novices, well-considered persons who have been called from the

[1] Eccleston, op. cit., p. 29. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 125.

world in crowds and aggregated to the communities, just when they mostly need as you know well (and who knows better ?) heavenly doctrine and salutary example, and above all devout leisure of a holy day to give themselves to holy things—yet are given over wholly to flesh and blood, to lathes and plaster, to sticks and stones and to all manner of worldly occupations, and no thought is given to the cultivation of the blessedness of their holy profession : not more cruelly than unwisely and sinfully. Again, the saving case of their being indifferently and at any moment neglected they are on any pretext and without any discrimination, constantly thrown back into the midst of worldly affairs from which they were drawn that by the promised observance of a heavenly religion they might keep company with the angels."[1]

Adam Marsh, as will be seen even from the two letters we have quoted, had the gift of downright speech. He was not given to soft words or weak excuses where principle or wrong-doing were concerned ; gentle and pitiful though he was to a weak or sinful brother himself.[2] To the confessed sinner he was ever ready to be a helpful friend : but he was ever fiercely outspoken when it was a question of upholding the purity and sincerity of one's religious profession whether within the cloister or without. His own entire simplicity of mind and purpose, combined with his entire and unselfish devotion to the ideals he reverenced, made him impatient of an easy-going tolerance of evils. There was in him something of the spirit of the prophets of Israel with their splendid vision of the promised Kingdom of God, their yearning over their own people and their sad and wrathful denunciation of their people's backsliding. At the time Adam Marsh

[1] *Epist. Adæ*, 202, loc. cit., pp. 361–363.

[2] Cf., *ibid.*, 94, 95, 96, pp. 351–353 ; also 198, p. 358 ; 201, p. 361.

wrote his second letter, the English houses of the Order were still comparatively mean and poor and the friars were still tolerably alert to the spiritual duties of their calling: but the decline from the first austere fervour had begun and Adam saw clearly the dangers of the perilous descent.[1] An accident which happened about this time shows that Adam was as loyal to his chosen life in his own personal observance as he was in his words to others. The Archdeacon of Northampton had sent Adam Marsh a large sum of money as a present. Adam refused to accept it as being inconsistent with his profession of poverty; whereupon the messenger threw the bag of money into his cell and went away. But Adam, with the consent of his fellow-friars, returned the bag of money to its owner just as it was, sealed with the archdeacon's seal.[2]

Throughout the long period of his Provincial ministry, William of Nottingham seems to have relied upon Adam as one of his most trusted councillors. Adam, as we have seen, was at the head of the commission of the English Province which drew up the reply concerning the Rule in 1241. On another occasion we find William of Nottingham, on the approach of a General Chapter, asking his advice concerning the proper persons to be elected ministers. Adam replies that in this matter the Provincial should follow the counsels of the saints and the tradition of the Fathers and the dictates of right reason, and not acquiesce in loud-voiced persuasions of the crowd. At the same time, he suggests at the Provincial's request three friars in order of merit, whom he considers best fitted to act as Vicar during the Provincial's absence.[3] Frequently, too, we find him in

[1] See also Grossoteste's warning to the friars of the danger of building large houses, in Eccleston, op. cit., appendix, p. 187.

[2] *Epist. Adæ*, 79, p. 195. [3] *Ibid.*, 198, loc. cit., pp. 355–356.

correspondence with the Provincial concerning the needs and welfare of the individual brethren. Sometimes it is the Provincial who seeks Adam's opinion as to what should be done with this or that friar ; often it is the friars themselves who ask Adam to lay their case before the minister. No finer testimony to his character is to be found, perhaps, than in the not inconsiderable portion of his correspondence pleading for some kindness to be shown to some friar in his particular need : though it is not only the friars, but all sorts of people in distress, who find in Adam a patient advocate. A great-hearted man he must have been though so inflexibly upright and clear-visioned : but that was all part of the man's great simplicity of mind and heart.

If any man proved the compatibility of a scholar's temperament with the pure simplicity of the Lady Poverty of St. Francis, that man was surely Adam Marsh. His scholarship and love of study did not stand apart from his worship of Franciscan ideal, but entered into this worship as into its rightful home. As we have elsewhere pointed out, much has been written undiscerningly regarding the repugnance of St. Francis to the acquirement of learning amongst his brethren. Yet it must be confessed that in the eventual issue the schools of the Order contributed to the loss of simplicity and the relaxation of poverty. Still it may be doubted whether the schools brought about the decline in spiritual idealism or were themselves spoiled by a general decline due to other causes. It is, in fact, very doubtful whether the idealism of Franciscan poverty could long have maintained itself in an ignorant and unlettered brotherhood once the heroic spiritual uplifting of the first days had passed. More likely it is that, as Grosseteste declared, the friars would fall into spiritual indolence—the shadow of darkness—did they not give themselves to the

active study of theology. It was not study, but the secular ambition to rival other Orders and, in particular, the Dominicans, which was the primal cause of the decline. It diverted the Franciscans too frequently from the proper path of their own development and proved the great snare. And as connected with this primal cause, was the snare of courting an easy popularity and secular advantage as was seen somewhat later, for instance in the building of large churches,[1] and not least in the abandonment of the more positive practical character of their earlier theology for the more fashionable wordy speculation of the later schoolmen.

The Oxford school, under the guidance of Grosseteste and Adam Marsh, was pre-eminently marked by its insistence on real, positive knowledge of the facts of life and authoritative sources of knowledge, and too by its ultimate purpose of making study subserve the practical needs of the Franciscan ministry in the Church. From the testimony of Roger Bacon and others, and from the works of Grosseteste and the early Oxford Franciscans, we can gain a fairly accurate knowledge of the teaching in the Oxford school.

Eccleston tells us, under Grosseteste, the friars "within a short time made progress both in subject and matter of theology (*in quæstionibus*) and in the subtle moralities which are useful in preaching."[2] By "subtle moralities" he means the art of illustrating one's doctrine by reference to the facts of natural life, so that from things known or understood by the people to whom he preached the preacher might lead them to a knowledge of the unknown. This

[1] St. Francis, it will be remembered, wished that his friars should not have large churches for the purpose of preaching, since, he said, it would give greater edification if the friars preached in the churches of others, rather than in their own.

[2] Eccleston, op. cit., p. 60.

method of " moralization " was a characteristic trait in the friar's preaching as is evident from the note-books compiled by the friars for the use of preachers.[1] As to the subject-matter of theology, it would seem that the study of the text of Scripture and of the Fathers of the Church held the first place in the scheme, though it is evident that much attention was given both to Canon Law and to what we now call moral theology—the practical teaching of the Church concerning right conduct and the use of the Sacraments.

But as supplementary to all this the theological scheme included a study of natural law and the experimental science and of languages. Without a knowledge of natural law and the experimental sciences, it was held, many parts of Scripture cannot be rightly understood, whilst the knowledge of languages was necessary for right textual criticism as well as for practical missionary work amongst the heathen. Roger Bacon, himself a product of the Oxford school—at a later period thus justified the system and extolled its leaders : "All wisdom that is of use to man is contained in the Holy Scriptures, though it may not be altogether there explained. The explanation is found in Canon Law and philosophy . . . but the whole validity of philosophy in dealing with the nature and properties of things natural, artificial or moral, lies in the iteral sense ; yet that by appropriate adaptations and similitudes the spiritual sense may be elicited. . . . Wherefore this is the right way of getting to know the Scriptures, and it is the way of the Saints and of all the wise men who have gone before us, such as the Bishop of Lincoln and Brother Adam (Marsh) and others. Thus may be entire wisdom of philosophy learned in the divine

[1] e.g. *Liber Exemplorum*, compiled about 1275 ; *Speculum Laicorum* (about 1280). *Vide* A. G. Little, *English Franciscan History*, p. 136 *seq.*

writings."[1] Again, Roger Bacon says : "All the Saints and Latin philosophers and poets had a knowledge of foreign languages, and did also all the wise men of former times, many of whom we have seen survive to our day, such as the Bishops of Lincoln and St. David's and Brother Adam Marsh."[2] All three, it may be noted, were amongst the first lecturers in the Oxford school.

The philosophy of which Roger Bacon speaks so highly is natural philosophy, but it was natural philosophy based on " the science of mathematics," that is of mathematical law. Bacon indeed regards this science of mathematics as essential to a right understanding of all phenomena, as did Grosseteste and Adam Marsh before him. " It was this doctrine not merely of a more or less isolated and suspected student, but of the founders of the Franciscan school at Oxford—of Grosseteste and Adam Marsh it was, in fact, the doctrine taught in the Oxford Franciscan school."[3]

As to Adam Marsh's contribution to the formation of this Oxford tradition, we have to rely on the eulogistic assertions of Roger Bacon ; for though Bacon speaks of " the writings of those great men (Grosseteste, Adam Marsh and others), as, for instance, in their works on the impression (of the elements), on the rainbow and the comets, on the sphere, and on other questions appertaining both to theology and to natural philosophy,"[4] no writings of Adam Marsh on these subjects have come down to us. But Roger Bacon was not the man to eulogise scientific attainments easily and

[1] *Opus Tertium*, ed. Brewer, pp. 81–82.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 88. The Bishop of St. David's was Thomas Wallensis, the third lecturer in the Franciscan school.

[3] A. G. Little, *English Franciscan History*, p. 196.

[4] *Opus Majus*, ed. Bridges, i. p. 108. Cf. Little, op. cit., p. 194.

without knowledge, especially in a department in which he himself was a master.

Turning from the "ancillary sciences" to theology proper, one would give much for a glimpse of those "optima scripta"—those fine writings which Salimbene says he had read. Amongst these was a commentary on the Book of Genesis which places Adam Marsh at the beginning of a long list of Franciscan commentators on the Books of Scripture who came from the Oxford school[1]; whilst a *Summa de Panitentia*[2] attributed to him is perhaps the first of a number of similar works written by English Franciscans for the guidance of confessors. Incidentally Adam's letters reveal to us something of theological reading. He requests the Provincial Minister, William of Nottingham, to have collated for him the treatise *De Trinitate* by Richard of St. Victor; at another time he asks the Provincial to send him the *Moralia* of St. Gregory and the treatise *De Natura Rerum* by Rabanus Maurus. In another letter to the Provincial, discussing the mystical interpretation of numbers in the Old Testament, he refers to the commentaries of SS. Gregory, Augustine and Bede. He requests Thomas Gallo, the mystical theologian of Vercelli, to send him his writings,

[1] Salimbene in *M.G.H. Scriptores*, Tom. XXXII, p. 296. One of the complaints against the friars on the part of the University was that they gave more attention to the study of the text of the Bible than to the sentences of Peter Lombard. (Cf. Rashdall, *Universities of Europe*, Vol. II, part II, p. 380.) This contention is borne out by the lectures of the early Oxford friars which have been preserved to us. The greater part consists of lectures on the various books of the old and New Testament. Next in order are treatises on natural science. There are comparatively few commentaries on Aristotle's Ethics and Metaphysics.

[2] The best known of these are the *Summa de Paenitentia* and a treatise *de Septem Vitiis* by John Wallensis; the *Summa de Sacramentis* by Henry of Brisingham; and the *Formula Confessionum* by John of Peccham.

whilst at the same time he sends the abbot a copy of his own commentary "*super Angelicam Lætare*" (? Angelical Salutation). He read with interest, but evidently with some caution, the writings of Abbot Joachim, concerning which he seeks Grosseteste's opinion. His quotations from St. Bernard show an intimate acquaintance with that Father's writings.[1] To his studies in natural science the letters give no clue, unless it be the treatise of Raban Maur. We find him, however, requesting Grosseteste to send a copy of Aristotle's Ethics to friar Hugh de Berious (? Bereola).[2] Adam Marsh's interest in mystical theology is clearly revealed in the list of books and authors just mentioned ; and his letters in their frequent digression into spiritual discussion show us a mind intimately attracted to mystical interpretation and at home in mystical thought. Between him and St. Bonaventura there is an evident kinship of spirit. It was perhaps this mystic's trait in his character which drew him to friar Warin of Haswell, of whose exposition of the text "Nova lux judaeis visa est,"[3] as applicable to the birth of the Blessed Virgin, Adam requested a copy : for Warin of Haswell was not only a gifted preacher, but one given to contemplative prayer in a notable degree.[4]

It was in 1247 or 1248 that Adam Marsh became Master of the Oxford Franciscan school on the elevation of Master Thomas of Wales to the bishopric of St. David's. Each of the first three Masters of the school had been successively created bishops. But he would have lectured in the school long before this, both as bachelor in theology and after

[1] Cf. *Epist. Adæ*, M., 43, 88, 180, 199, 213.

[2] *Epist.*, 26, p. 114. Adam's pupil, Thomas of York, lectured *super metaphysican Aristotelis*.

[3] The text is probably a liturgical adaptation : I have not been able to trace it in the Bible.

[4] Eccleston, op. cit., p. 122.

receiving his doctorate. Not improbably the "*Expositiones super Angelicam Lætare*" which he sent to the abbot of Vercelli were lectures given to the friars; and the abbot died, as we have seen, in 1246. Adam, however, was a Regent Master in theology in 1248, since in that year he presented Robert Marsh, Archdeacon of Oxford, for his doctor's degree.[1] He continued Regent until the following year, when he was succeeded by Ralph of Colebridge.[2] He did not cease teaching in the school when he ceased to be Regent Master.[3] But his lectures were more and more frequently interrupted by the increasingly active part he was called upon to take in public affairs. Often in these later years we find him looking longingly from a distance to the quietude of his cell in the Oxford friary that he might give himself to the study of the Scriptures, and escape the distractions of secular affairs. Yet though his heart longed for solitude and study he was too much of a friar to refuse the calls made upon him when these calls implied a duty towards others. He looked, however, with some anxiety upon the growing practice of bishops and nobles demanding the services of the friars in their households; for this, he foresaw, must lead to a decrease in spirituality and religious observance. For himself he found it necessary to obtain a Papal injunction against the increasing demands of the bishops for his services.[4] He was at all times ready to go forth and work for the good of souls, however weary he might be—and his letters often show him very weary both in body and spirit—but he was jealous for his spiritual

[1] Cf. *Epist. Adæ*, 34, loc. cit., p. 135.

[2] Eccleston, op. cit., p. 64. M. 1252 Adam writes that he had ceased teaching in the University, i.e., as Regent Master, for three years past. (*Epist.*, 192, p. 348).

[3] Cf. *Epist. Adæ*, 146, p. 231; 190, p. 242.

[4] *Epist. Adæ*, 225, loc. cit., p. 392. Cf. *Epist.*, 173, p. 313.

freedom as a friar, and would not barter it either for the favour of those in high places or for a secular freedom from the common observance of a friar's vocation. To the end he kept that " zealous love of Franciscan poverty " and of the unworldly idealism of the Franciscan life, which had driven him to take the Franciscan habit in the Worcester friary.

III

When Adam Marsh sought admission amongst the Franciscans at Worcester, it is not improbable that he had in mind to separate himself more completely from associations in which he was a man of no mean influence and position. It would be in keeping with the simplicity and thoroughness of his character thus to make an entire renunciation not only of wealth and place, but of the homage paid to his intellectual abilities and moral qualities. In the Oxford friary, as he must have well known, he could not lay aside altogether, if at all, the position he had gained in the councils of his friends and associates in the university. Possibly it was the influence of these friends, and in particular of Robert Grosseteste, which brought Adam Marsh back to Oxford. Between Grosseteste and Adam Marsh there had been a friendship of many years,[1] fostered in part by intellectual sympathy and common studies[2]; and yet more by deep religious feeling and convictions. For they both belonged to what might not inaptly be called the Oxford Reform movement of the thirteenth century. The movement had already begun when the friars first came to Oxford. Religious feeling in the university had been stirred

[1] Adam in Epist., says Grosseteste had been a friend to him from his youth—"a juvenilibus annis."

[2] It is evident from Roger Bacon's declaration that Grosseteste and Adam Marsh had been perfected in mathematics only by thirty or forty years' study, that they had been pursuing this study before Adam Marsh became a friar.

by the apostolic fervour of St. Edmund Rich, the future Archbishop of Canterbury, then a lecturer in the schools. Edmund spent practically all his emoluments in relieving the poor, so that frequently he had to depend on the charity of others for his own food. He would leave the lecture-room to go and preach to the people in the churchyard of the town or in the neighbouring villages. His radiant purity and spirit of prayer compelled the reverence of all with whom he came in contact. In him the spirit of the Apostles seemed to live afresh. He was not gifted with the qualities which make a leader of men : he had no thought of forming a party or leading a movement ; yet there can be no doubt that his modest and retiring personality was a powerful religious influence in the university, stimulating the consciences of men and leading many to examine their own attitude towards prevalent abuses sanctioned by custom, in the ecclesiastical life of the time, though frequently denounced in the decrees of the General Councils and Provincial synods of the Church. So that when the friars arrived in Oxford there were already many within the university whose consciences were troubled and whose thoughts were turning towards a higher ideal of the priest's vocation, and a more spiritual conception of the Christian life. As the movement developed in intensity and force it found its most doughty exponent in Robert Grosseteste, the most forceful personality in the university. Beside him stood such men as Robert Bacon, who afterwards became a Dominican friar ; Sewal, the future Archbishop of York ; St. Richard Wych, who later on was to fill the See of Chichester ; and Adam Marsh. The main points upon which these were agreed were that the Church must be freed from the undue domination of the secular power which used the Church and the clergy for secular purposes to the

injury of their spiritual character ; that the charge of souls must be committed to a clergy conscious of their responsibilities and animated by the pastoral spirit and properly educated for the ministry. At the same time these men were all conscious that ecclesiastical freedom was bound up with the general liberties of the nation as against the arbitrary and unjust usurpations of the Crown. Unless the whole nation were governed by the rule of justice and with a due regard to national liberties, the Church might bask in the favour of the civil power, but it could have no true freedom. The Church must be free to do its work for the people, and not merely to enjoy honorific privileges. As the Reform movement grew and became more active it was clear that what these men were contending for, was not so much clerical immunities—though they insisted on their maintenance—but for the substantial freedom of the clergy to do the work to which they were called ; to minister to the souls of the people ; to uphold justice and holiness and to withstand iniquity. In what might be called their ultimate programme, we find them insisting that the clergy shall be freed from purely secular office, such as that of itinerant judges ; that no clergy shall hold a benefice unless he is willing and able to fulfil the pastoral charge attached to it ; that the clergy must preach to the people and preach to them in their native tongue ; and that no cleric shall be given the charge of souls unless he has been sufficiently educated as to be able to instruct the people in their religion.

The coming of the friars, Dominican and Franciscan, undoubtedly gave an impetus to the movement : without the support of their idealism and apostolic fervour the movement might never have gathered the force it did. Their fresh enthusiasm and apostolic zeal offered undreamt-of possibilities for the good of the Church and the nation to

men like St. Edmund Rich and Robert Grosseteste. When the Dominicans opened their theological school St. Edmund lectured there, and until his death he maintained a close association with them.

In the case of Robert Grosseteste one may say with no hesitation that his close association with the Franciscans from the time he began to lecture in their school, both strengthened his convictions as to the need of clerical reform and gave them a more definite character. There can be little doubt that his admiration for their apostolic poverty contributed to his decision in 1232, to renounce all his benefices except his prebend in Lincoln Cathedral.[1]

When in 1235 Grosseteste was elected to the See of Lincoln, the most extensive diocese in England, and given the opportunity of carrying forward his policy of reform, he could rely upon the support of the friars whom he had helped to train and who, as events were to prove, were one with him in his love of justice and hatred of tyranny as well as in his ideal of a clergy purified from secular ambitions and lust of wealth, and working freely and purely for the spiritual good of the people. Throughout the eighteen years of his strenuous episcopate Grosseteste maintained the closest relations with the Oxford friary; and in Adam Marsh he had there one who may deservedly be called the Nestor of the struggle for reform in which Grosseteste soon became the acknowledged leader.

It would perhaps be difficult to overestimate how much the bishop owed to the sagacity and loyal support of his friend in the hard days now before him. At heart Grosseteste was one of the tenderest of men and he had a passion for just dealing: he was singularly selfless and humble;

[1] *Vide* Epist. *Grosseteste*, 9, p. 45, where Grosseteste speaks of his haunting fear lest the possession of riches might damn his soul.

yet there was in him a certain impetuosity and rugged obstinacy in matters of principle. He was more of a prophet than a statesman in his fearless advocacy of the right and his hatred of compromise with ungodliness in any guise. Yet he was sensitive to both criticism and praise, not in a small conceited way, but because at heart he loved his fellow-men and would have them all at one with himself in the cause for which he stood. Adam Marsh shared his hatred of compromise on matters of principle, and was no less urgent than Grosseteste himself that the work of reform should be carried through in face of opposition from whatever quarter. But Adam was never impetuous: he lacked the driving force which made Grosseteste a leader of men in a time of stress, but he had the calmer temperament and more detached judgment. Thus whilst on the one hand we find him supporting Grosseteste, and ever urging him forward in his heroic endeavour to uplift the Church and the priesthood, yet on the other hand we find him at times urging a "sweet reasonableness." In the dispute between Grosseteste and the Chapter of Lincoln which dragged on for six years, Adam evidently thought the bishop too rigidly uncompromising as to his rights, too obstinate perhaps in asserting his authority, for he tells him that, according to the Divine commandment, "those who rule should seek rather to be loved than feared, and those in authority in the Church should regard themselves rather as the fathers of the poor than as princes of the people".[1] Nevertheless, to Adam Marsh, Grosseteste was "as another Elias".[2] What Adam was to Grosseteste is made clear in a letter written about 1237 when already the bishop had begun to make those visitations of his diocese which spread consternation amongst the laxer clergy. The letter is thus

[1] *Epist. Adæ*, 42, p. 146. [2] *Ibid.*, 180, p. 325.

addressed, and marks the growing intimacy between the two : " To his Adam Marsh, his unworthy and sinful bishop, health and himself." " May the Bestower of all good things," it continues, " bestow upon you the reward of your untiring labour. And this loving labour of years will not be to you in vain, but be eternally fruitful, whatever be its result in regard to myself. Yet confiding in the mercy of our Blessed Saviour and in the prayers of His holy Mother, I hope that your labour will attain to a happy issue even with myself. For what to us may seem long and much delayed, to those who stand with eternity, frequently is quickly done and done before the time. In any case, I am grateful for your holy, sweet and efficacious words which have indeed left the mark intended by you upon my hardness, and I thank you, not as much as I ought and wish, but prostrate at the feet of your sincere affection, as far as and in the way I am able. For in your words of persuasion I have found you alone to be a true friend and faithful councillor, one who looks upon the truth and not to mere appearance ; and who rests on a firm and solid foundation, not on a hollow and fragile reed. Wherefore let the loving intercession of your holy prayers assist me that I may be persuaded of what you so holily and convincingly seek to persuade me ; and also that what you have put before me, be not prevented from having its effect in deeds by the false endeavours of the ancient foe and his members : lest at any time I be compelled to join hands with the enemies of truth and the ministers of iniquity."

What precisely was the matter of advice here referred to we can only surmise. In all probability Adam Marsh was urging the bishop forward on the path of reform,[1] and perhaps at the same time seeking to temper his zeal with

[1] Cf. *R. Grosseteste, Epist.*, 17, loc. cit., p. 64.

discretion : as he often did afterwards. The letter goes on to speak of the opposition which Grosseteste had aroused and to which Adam had referred in his own letter : and then Grosseteste touched upon a personal matter between himself and his friend. Adam had expressed a fear lest his frequent letters might prove burdensome to Grosseteste ; and this is the bishop's reply :

" I want you to put far from you this fear : for next after listening to your holy conversation when you are present, there is nothing in human things which gladdens me so much as the comfort of your letters."[1]

It would seem that from the beginning of his episcopate Grosseteste relied much on Adam's practical judgment in the selection of candidates to fill the benefices of his diocese. In 1237 Adam was one of those to whom Grosseteste referred William of Raleigh's petition that a benefice be conferred upon William de Grana.[2] Not a few of his letters are recommendations of worthy candidates : in one, at least, he denounces a candidate as altogether unworthy. That the candidate should have a sufficient knowledge of theology to instruct the people under his charge was but one qualification. What the other qualifications were, is indicated in a letter Adam wrote concerning the clerics admitted to the bishop's household. " Never, I pray you," he writes, " let anyone be admitted into the company of your beatitude, however much reputed for learning according to a worldly judgment, unless he is presumed to be beyond doubt an emulator of mercy, a seeker after truth, a defender of justice and a lover of peace."[3] It is therefore not surprising that Adam has to confess sorrowfully the difficulty in finding worthy candidates for the pastoral charge. " What is more

[1] *Epist. Grosseteste*, 20, pp. 69–71.
[2] *Ibid.*, 17, p. 64. [3] *Epist. Adæ*, 12, p. 94.

sad in these evil days," he complained, "than to see the world filled with men of the clerical profession . . . yet scarcely is one to be found whom the bishops may safely take to themselves as a trustworthy assistant in the ministry of salvation."[1] Adam's standard of worthiness was high; yet assuredly not too high if the pastoral office was to be raised out of the slough of despair into which it had fallen, and be restored to its pristine dignity in the life of the Church. Yet how was it possible to restore the dignity and honour of the ministry when the benefices originally created for those who exercised the ministry were regarded as the proper emoluments of favourites or officials of those in high places, whilst the pastoral duties themselves were left to clerics of inferior standing who for a small pittance discharged the duties of the absentee rectors? That was the great grievance: so long as it remained unhealed, it was plainly impossible to do much to raise up an efficient and worthy pastoral clergy. The sacred office was itself debased by the hirelings who in the words of St. Edmund Rich: "had no care for the sheep but to fleece them". Grosseteste's episcopate was one long struggle against this abuse. The struggle brought him into collision not only with the King and lesser magnates of the realm, but with monks and bishops and even with the Roman Court. This is not the place to trace the origins of the abuse. Much might be said in extenuation of the practice in its first beginnings. But at its best it had been the lesser evil: in the second quarter of the thirteenth century it had become so great an evil that none could be found seriously to defend it even amongst those who practised it except on the ground that they had not the courage to desist from it. That is what their half-hearted apologies really came to: except in the case of the

[1] *Epist. Adæ*, 40, p. 144.

territorial landlords, clerical and lay, who resisted reform in the determination not to acknowledge the need for reform.

The system was morally discredited even whilst it was practised: and one has to remember this in judging the action of Grosseteste in refusing to countenance the system even in the face of Papal demands. He was utterly sincere when he told Innocent IV that his filial respect for the Apostolic See did not allow him to bring the authority of the Papacy into disrepute by appointing the Pope's nominees to benefices when they were unwilling or unable to discharge their pastoral duties.[1] In this attitude Adam Marsh was at one with Grosseteste. Like Grosseteste he had the most profound reverence for "the one and supreme Pontiff who by divine institution rules over all the nations of the world"[2]; and too in the early years of the reign of Innocent IV, like Grosseteste he looked expectantly to that Pontiff for some active policy to remedy the evils which afflicted the Church.[3] Unhappily, Innocent's ecclesiastical policy was largely dominated by his political difficulties with the Empire, and, notwithstanding the warnings of such men as Saint Louis and Grosseteste, the taxation of the Churches and the foisting of incapable or unworthy clerics into benefices went on apace. It went nigh to breaking the spirit of the great Grosseteste: to Adam Marsh it seemed the crowning affliction that "the two swords" of the Church—the spiritual and civil powers—should thus be turned upon the Church itself.[4]

The increasing sadness which filled the heart of Adam Marsh as the years went on is evident from his letters. Gradually he came to lose hope of any redress from the

[1] *Epist. R. Grosseteste*, CXXVIII. [2] *Epist. Adæ*, p. 415.
[3] Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 422–423; *Epist. R. Grosseteste*, CXI.
[4] Cf. *Epist. Adæ*, 148, p. 481.

powers that be, whether in the Church or in the Realm: and his only hope for any future remedy lay in the constancy and patience of those who stood for the great cause. Their constancy would triumph in the end, and the truth would prevail even though all the world was against them. "Alone our Saviour overthrew the mighty principality of this world; through Him our Saviour, Elias, alone, withstood Samaria; Eliseus, alone, withstood Syria; Peter, alone, stood for the uncircumcised; Paul, alone, withstood circumcision; Thomas, alone, withstood England; and so too other innumerable champions of the heavenly Kingdom alone, without comrades, are known to have engaged in battle, sometimes triumphantly, the most monstrous despotisms of the world."[1] Thus Adam Marsh wrote to Sewal, Archbishop of York, about the beginning of 1258. When Sewal died that same year, Adam Marsh remained the last of that band of active reformers who had gathered around Saint Edmund Rich and Robert Grosseteste in the school at Oxford.

Somewhat in the same strain, Adam Marsh had written to Grosseteste some six or seven years previously in reply to a letter in which the bishop, sensitive as he was strong, had spoken of the displeasure and ill-will which his policy of reform had aroused against him. Adam replies: "O how happily, it seems to me, is to be taken that which you mention in your letter, namely that what you have done for the liberation of souls, has rendered you odious not only to monks and their candidates admitted to the cure of souls, but even to many of your fellow-bishops, to the gentry and magnates who have the presentation to livings, to the Lord King and even to the Roman Court. The which you have not boasted of foolishly, but touched upon humbly. . . .

[1] Cf. *Epist, Adæ*, p. 489.

Nothing surely redounds more excellently to the honour of a pious bishop, nothing more truly sheds lustre upon him, nothing more gladly delights him, nothing tends more to his increase."[1]

Yet ardent apostle as he was of the reform, there was nothing of the temper of the partisan in the spirit of Adam Marsh. There was that in him which was ever seeking reconciliation and peace, provided that the good of men's souls suffered no injury in the reconciliation. Thus he mediated successfully in a dispute between Grosseteste and the priory of Newham[2] over the presentation of a benefice. In the controversy between the bishop and the monks of Canterbury concerning the right of the Chapter to metropolitan powers, Adam addressed a long letter to Nicholas Sandwich, the Cathedral prior, as courteous as it was urgent, in the hope of bringing about an agreement.[3] Nor did he fail on several occasions to urge Grosseteste himself to show a more conciliatory temper in his attitude towards those who opposed him. Thus in reference to some dispute, not improbably that between Grosseteste and the Chapter of Lincoln, Adam Marsh tells the bishop : " Some not without cause take badly this dreadful quarrel between you and your subjects. You know that the divine commandment lays it down that those in authority should seek more to be loved than to be feared by those under them ; and those in high places in the Church should look upon themselves as fathers of the poor rather than as princes of the people.[4]

Adam's single-mindedness in working for the purification of the Church is well illustrated in his dealings with Boniface of Savoy, who was elected to the primatial See of Canterbury

[1] *Epist. Adæ*, 36, p. 139. [2] *Ibid.*, 45, p. 148 ; cf. 36, p. 138.
[3] *Ibid.*, 92, p. 211–219.
[4] *Ibid.*, 42, p. 146 ; cf. *Epist.*, 58, p. 167.

in 1243 after the death of St. Edmund. The appointment was not ideal from the point of view of the reformers. Boniface owed his election mainly to the fact that he was the Queen's uncle : it was plainly an instance of the King's anxiety to provide for the Queen's relatives ; and the Pope's confirmation of the election was equally plainly due to a desire to meet the King's wishes. Grosseteste evidently viewed the appointment with some uneasiness since in 1245 he wrote to Cardinal Hugo urging that the new Archbishop should have the assistance of some Dominican or Franciscan friars who were well versed not only in the civil and canon law, but in the knowledge of holy Scripture and having in themselves the wisdom to be derived from such knowledge.[1]

For the Archbishop was himself but little acquainted either with canon law or theology. Yet he was not altogether lacking in the qualities which should be demanded from a prelate. He seems to have impressed his contemporaries as a man of sincerity, and there was no doubt about the uprightness of his character.[2] As Archbishop he certainly endeavoured to do his duty ; was honest even if he was not always wise. On taking possession of the See in 1249 he at once entered into correspondence with Adam Marsh, with whom he had probably become acquainted at the Council of Lyons four years previously, requesting the assistance of certain of the friars. Adam took the opportunity to address to him a lengthy letter in which he set forth the responsibility of the episcopal office and the qualifications of a pastor of souls. The true pastor is one who fulfils the scriptural injunction " to go forth and enter in before the people " : he must go forth to preach the Word of God, to set his hand to good works and to administer the

[1] *Epist. Grosseteste*, 115.

[2] Cf. *Annales Monastici*, Roll Series, Vol. IV, p. 235.

Sacraments; he must enter into the chamber of prayer, into the study-room of meditation and into the sanctuary of contemplation. Finally, he warns the Archbishop that for every soul committed to his charge he must render an account at the day of judgment.[1]

For the next few years Adam is found constantly assisting Boniface in the affairs of his province. He accompanied the Archbishop on his first metropolitan visitation and was present at his stormy meeting with the canons of St. Paul's in London.[2] That he approved the Archbishop's intentions in regard to this visitation, is evident[3]; but of the wisdom of Boniface's methods he shows some doubt in a letter to the Provincial Minister, William of Nottingham, in which he states his reasons for not continuing in the Archbishop's service on the conclusion of this visitation. Nevertheless he is willing to assist with his advice.[4]

It is indeed a remarkable testimony to the acknowledged sincerity and selflessness of Adam Marsh that, notwithstanding his outspoken and fearless advocacy of reform, he was revered and consulted by the leading men of all parties in the kingdom. The King might be offended by the friar's outspoken denunciation of abuses[5] and call him a traitor, yet he sent him as envoy on at least two occasions to France[6]; at one moment he might discountenance Adam's employment in the service of the Archbishop, yet again he is willing that he should continue in the Archbishop's service.[7] In 1257, when Archbishop Boniface endeavoured to appoint Adam Marsh to the See of Ely,

[1] *Epist. Adæ*, 1, pp. 80–82.
[2] *Ibid.*, 182, p. 327.
[3] *Ibid.*, 188, p. 334. Cf. *Epist.*, 57, p. 166.
[4] *Ibid.*, 32, p. 131.
[5] *Epist. Adæ*, 143, p. 275; 188, p. 335.
[6] Liberate Roll, 31 Hen. III, m. 4; 42 Hen. III, m. 3—quoted by Little, *Grey Friars in Oxford*, pp. 307–308.
[7] *Epist. Adæ*, 170, p. 308.

notwithstanding that the monks had elected their sub-prior, it is said that the King connived at the Archbishop's action.[1] Henry's Queen Eleanor was a more consistent friend, as is evident not only from Adam's letters to her, but from his reference to her in his letters to others.

To Richard, Earl of Cornwall and his wife, Senchia, Adam seems to have been a welcome councillor ; on one occasion he mediated between the Earl and the King in some angry quarrel between the two.[2] This was but one of several occasions on which the Queen called upon Adam to act as peacemaker between the King and his relatives. Notable amongst such interventions were the efforts made by Adam Marsh to bring about a better understanding between Henry III and Simon de Montfort.[3]

Adam's intimate friendships with the redoubtable Earl of Leicester is one of the outstanding things in the friar's well-filled life. His affection for the Earl was second only to his worshipful affection for Bishop Grosseteste ; and it was founded in the same motive : for in Grosseteste and de Montfort Adam Marsh saw the two men whose fearlessness and sincerity inspired him with some hope that the evils which oppressed both the Church and the nation would some day be remedied or at least not go unrebuked. "O most gracious Earl," he exclaims in one of his letters, "what purity, what enlightenment, what holiness will you receive in the Divine reward in the Kingdom of God for what you have untiringly sought to accomplish with such happy solicitude and by wise ruling, for the purification, the illumination and the sanctification of the Church of God."[4]

[1] Matth. Paris, *Chron. Maj.*, an. 1257.
[2] *Epist. Adæ*, 155, p. 291.
[3] Cf. *Epist. Adæ*, 49, p. 152 ; *ibid.*, 140, p. 268.
[4] *Epist. Adæ*, 137, p. 264.

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The words anticipate the hymn attributed to Franciscan authorship, in which the people sang of Simon's "martyrdom" after the fatal battle of Eversham. In another letter, Adam confesses that "amongst all mortals" there is none for whom he has a greater affection than for the Earl; and his reference to the gathering darkness in which they both stand suggests the reason.[1] All through Simon de Montfort's troublous history, from the time he was first sent to Gascony to establish law and order in that mutinous dominion until the evening shadows closed in upon Adam's own life, there is evidence of the friar's anxious concern for the great Earl. Adam recognized clearly enough the thankless burden imposed upon the Earl by the wayward King whose only sure principle was his weak egoism, and love of flattery. Adam knew the King's jealousy of the more dominating personality of the Earl; and too he was aware that the Earl had but few genuine friends even amongst the discontented nobles.[2] Adam, had he lived to see it, would hardly have been surprised at the desertions from the Earl's own party, which led to the ultimate disaster, though possibly, had Adam lived, his influence with the Earl might have prevented some of de Montfort's fatal mistakes. For Adam knew well the Earl's weaknesses—his impetuous and biting tongue and his impatience in face of opposition: nor had he hesitated to warn the Earl against these dangers in himself.[3] But despite these weaknesses the friar saw in Simon de Montfort one of the few men of power and position in the kingdom who sincerely sought the good of the realm and whose political acts were governed by Christian piety,

[1] *Epist. Adæ*, 139, p. 266.
[2] Cf. *Epist. Adæ*, 30, p. 122; 140, p. 266.
[3] *Epist. Adæ*, 143, p. 270; 161, p. 297.

a sense of honour, and a zeal for justice and good government.[1]

How far Adam Marsh contributed to the formation or growth of the Earl's political ideas it is impossible to say. Adam in his letters to the Earl urges the moral principles which should lie at the root of government : amongst these are piety towards God, the keeping inviolately of good faith towards men, upright dealing, amicable intercourse with the well disposed, reasonable argument with malcontents, and charity towards all.[2] Doubtless in this summary of the foundations of a Christian government, Adam Marsh was pointing the remedy for the anarchic condition of the nation as he saw it. And perhaps in these principles of good government we have some echo of the treatise on government and tyranny which Grosseteste at one time submitted to Simon de Montfort and Adam Marsh for their consideration.[3] But there is no evidence that either Grosseteste or Adam Marsh had any part in the formulation of Simon de Montfort's future House of Representatives in which some historians have seen the beginning of English parliamentary government. Yet there can be little doubt that what was best in de Montfort's political character—his sincere devotion to the liberties of the realm and to the ideal of justice in the administration of government—was fostered and strengthened in his intimate intercourse with the friar who was his most trusted councillor.

Adam Marsh did not live to be the Earl's support and advisor in the last years of the tragic reign of Henry III ; for Adam died in 1259.[4]

[1] Cf. *Epist. Adæ*, 130, p. 261. [2] *Epist. Adæ*, 135, p. 261.
[3] Cf. *Epist. Adæ*, 25, p. 110.
[4] The date of Adam's death is nowhere noted in contemporary documents. That he was alive in January, 1259, seems certain, since Simon de

With his passing away not only Simon de Montfort lost a good friend. We have mentioned the names of some of those in high places in the kingdom who looked to Adam Marsh for counsel and assistance in difficult moments. Yet one does not know Adam Marsh who fails to take into account in estimating his character, the humbler folk on whose behalf this overworked friar was ever ready to put forth a helping hand. Adam Marsh's letters are not all concerned with high affairs of Church and State : a vast number of them are concerned to rectify injustices done to obscure individuals who have sought his aid, to assist with a word of approbation some insignificant scholar with his foot on the bottom rung of the ladder of life, to plead forgiveness for some erring one who wishes to retrace his steps. He must have been a man of large and generous soul, that all sorts and conditions of men should thus seek his advocacy.

The letters of his last years reveal a growing sadness and despondency in his outlook on the times. Perhaps he too, like Grosseteste, had begun to perceive that peace would come only by the sword.

When at length his wearied soul passed out of its earthly strife, they buried his body in Lincoln Cathedral close to the grave of Bishop Grosseteste, for those who loved Adam Marsh remembered the great love which made these two as one in mind and heart.

Montfort appointed him one of his executors in his will of that date. It is the last contemporary document in which Adam is mentioned. Cf. C. Bemont. Simon de Montfort, compte de Leicester, savie ; Paris, 1884.

A MODERN FRIAR

I

On February the 5th, 1911, there died in the Franciscan friary at Pantasaph in North Wales, a friar of whom it may be said that in him the spirit lived which made the Franciscan friars revered by the English people in the far-off thirteenth century. He was a man with a gift for creating enthusiasms, an idealist in close touch with the mental and moral life of his time, a believer in the essential sincerity of the movements—religious, intellectual and social—which take hold of the world's life; and yet withal instinctively Catholic in his every thought and affection. The wide embrace in which he took to himself the life of his age, far from lessening his loyalty to the Church, only bound him to her the more enthusiastically. In his mind's eye, he always saw the spirit of Catholicism brooding over the restless world, and the Church in all ages gathering to itself and incorporating into her own life, the winnowed grain of the harvest of secular progression. That mental vision kept him intimately patient and loyal even when it seemed to him that the conservative forces within the Church were lacking in due sympathy with the progressive forces of the world; and it gave to his very criticisms, the winning tone of one who is affectionately loyal even when he must find fault. He was not given greatly to criticism except to discover the truth or the goodness in the ideas or things which

came before him ; and though he had a fine argumentative faculty, he instinctively sought out the strength of a position rather than its weakness. To the end he kept an actively receptive mind which, combined with an intense moral earnestness and a certain impetuosity of temperament, made his presence felt in any company of men as a stimulating breeze.

To him the world was always more or less a wonder-land. He delighted in the play of vital forces whether physical or spiritual, intellectual or social, secular or religious : he took them all as indications of the hidden mysterious life which lies beyond the senses ; and as such they filled him with a certain awe. His was, in a sense, a child's wonder at the world : he always in the first instance apprehended the phenomena of life as unexpected facts, and accepted them as beautiful or ugly without asking whether they were true or false. Only, after this visual apprehension his mind would quickly fly off to the hidden world of which he instinctively felt the phenomenal world was but a consequence and a revelation ; and his soul was restless with questionings and the desire to pierce the veils of the visible.

With the gift of child-wonder went also that joy in the imaginative world—a joy which swiftly passes into belief—which is also more commonly the heritage of the child than of the grown-up man. It may be said that whatever he gazed upon, he saw with the imagination and not merely with the eyes. This was apt to be a difficulty to those who were of a more matter-of-fact cast of mind. He would speak of things as they presented themselves to his own vision, that is, as an experience of the outer world apprehended in the transmuting fire of his own subjective life : just as an imaginative child will tell of fiery dragons in the western sky at sunset, where the disillusioned eyes of older years

see but broken, colour-laden clouds. Only by a reflex effort could he separate the subjective element from the objective : and then it was oftentimes with a lingering prejudice which was half-conviction, in favour of the first conscious impression.

Nevertheless he was a keen observer. His nature was impressionable to all manifestations of life whether animate or inanimate, physical or spiritual. A starlit sky, a ripening cornfield, a page of history, some result of archæological research, a fresh treatise on theology, the unloading of a boat at a London wharf—whatever showed life, held him in thrall, whilst his imagination took in the suggestions of mystery and his reasoning intellect sought out the more universal truth which lies beyond the particular manifestation. For he was ever restless to look upon life's spiritual unity amidst diversity. In a large and magnificent way, he was one of Nature's democrats, in that he believed with intimate conviction in the essential relationship of all phenomena ; and yet with a simple delight he would confess to Nature's aristocracy in the narrow sphere of excelling individual perfection, as one rejoices in the flower which crowns the plant. Such was the character of his mind.

Physically he seemed a strong man, full of abounding energy. His death from a painful disease at the comparatively early age of forty-seven, astonished those who knew him : it was almost incredible that one so vigorous and tireless, could have succumbed within a few weeks : for it was but a few weeks between his first confession of sickness and his death. Yet the disease had been upon him for months : he had suffered silently and with no intermission of physical and mental labour. As one who attended him in his last days remarked, Father Alphonsus was one of the men who break but never bend. So he passed away,

having never lost the insistency of youth nor his gift of wonder.

. . . . . .

When Father Alphonsus became a novice in the Order of the Friars Minor Capuchin, he was but a youth in his sixteenth year: yet it is said that even at that age he had read and pondered upon the Darwinian theory of evolution and other deep subjects. The statement is not improbably true to fact, for even in those early years he had the air of a student thoughtful beyond his years. At the same time he had a youth's healthy delight in action; though he instinctively preferred work to mere play. He would rather weed a garden than take part in a game; he was happier in a potato-field than on a bowling-green. Mere distraction or mere self-realization never appealed to him: he was always even in his recreation thirsting to be in touch with the real and larger life beyond himself. Such joy as he found in games was from the companionship of his fellows, or from the appreciative knowledge of others which the game revealed to him. But manual work was to him good in itself: it brought him into spiritual fellowship with a life not found in books nor in the school: it was a vital experience. He had but just finished his year's novitiate when the writer of these pages first met him in the garden of a friary: a youthful friar, fresh and plump as boys often are, contentedly wheeling a barrow, and with an apron over his brown habit; but in the boy-friar's face was a dreamy wistfulness, and yet a wistfulness which might at any moment break into laughter. A more intimate acquaintance with him in after years did but fill in that first clear impression as a painter's brush produces the finished picture from a true first pencil sketch. At any time, even when he had the ruling of a province of his Order in his hands, he would

freely take up any work, however menial, which entered into the day's service: yet all the while he was as one gazing into the deeper mysteries with searching eye; and always was the laughter waiting hand-maidenly upon the serious preoccupation. He must always combine thought with action: nor did he disdain any activity which had a real, however commonplace or insignificant, usefulness. In fact he would say there was nothing small in life, except as men made things small either by stupidity or moral meanness. Whatever entered as by a necessity into one's life, whether it be the solving of a mental problem, or the overcoming of a moral temptation, or the cleaning of one's boots —all was viewed by him in the light of the human personality or the purpose of the universe.

He was indeed apt to delight in contrasts: life itself as he saw it, revealed itself in contrasts. He loved to find strength in weakness, an elemental moral purpose in the clearing away of a rubbish-heap, the promise of definite character in the foibles of youth. He suspected the sincerity of a grey uniformity. Truth, he would say, manifests itself in this world in colour and inequalities and contradictions. Nor did he altogether trust any man or system who was not in some aspect or on some occasion a legitimate subject for a jest. And yet reverence was perhaps the dominating moral quality in his character: a broad, wide-spreading reverence for all things which are, whether in heaven or earth. He felt a sort of awe in the presence of the poor with the illimitable mysteries of their poverty; or in the presence of youth with its crudities and unbalanced impulse indicative of energies struggling for expression. He would speak with a restraining respect of a master of the schools with whose opinions he must needs find fault; he was impatient of those who readily criticized superiors; he had a marked

delicacy about prying into the personal concerns of others. His laughter was never ill-intentioned and but seldom had in it any element of bitterness ; when he laughed it was almost invariably in good comradeship, or out of his enjoyment of life. He was quick to see the humour which lies in the tragedy and comedy of things ; but always behind his laughter was the sympathy born of his great reverence. And that sympathy was a marvellous thing to those who knew him well : a penetrating, bracing sympathy which strengthened whilst it comforted, and carried a man forward in hope and resolution. And this was, I think, because he always sided instinctively with the larger, nobler self in the man before him. His sympathy went out directly to the man himself with his possibilities of moral or spiritual achievement, and he regarded the difficulties in the man's way chiefly as so many opportunities for attaining to the greater self. He always took a man at the best he saw in him, or hoped for him. At the same time this further vision did not make him irresponsive to the actual trouble through which a man must pass, and he had an almost maternal tenderness for the bruised reed and the timorous novice.

His optimism at times seemed too eager ; and he did not always make sufficient allowance for the more petty motives which determine the action of the greater number of men, and sometimes mingle subtly even with true principle ; and consequently he was a poor diplomatist : when he played the diplomatist, he failed. It was not so much that he was unaware of the pettiness : oftentimes he saw it clearly enough. But there was that in him—a romantic idealism, perhaps—which made him shrink from confessing to its presence, as though the mere acknowledgment were a taint. Perhaps some will suggest that his great reverence for men and things was due to this disinclination to acknowledge

the meaner motives which enter into the world's life. But this was not so. His reverence was too deep-seated in his character ; it was the inseparable companion of his wonderment at the good things he did see.

Thus through all his ceaseless quest for knowledge there ran an exalted religious purpose. Beyond the knowledge he sought life, and the life worshipful. A scholar in the restricted sense of the word he was not ; though he read widely and thought penetratingly. In him the scholar passed quickly and eagerly into the man of action ; not necessarily the man of external activities, but the man who transmutes knowledge as he gains it, into moral and spiritual activity ; who must shape his purposes and motives and aspirations according to the larger life which knowledge opens out to him. Knowledge for knowledge' sake had no meaning for him except that of vanity. He read and studied that he might live ; and this thirst for life led him to seek it not only in books but in action. Indeed, voracious reader as he was, he deemed that book knowledge needed the experience gained " in doing things," before it could be a vital personal possession and conviction ; and he held that in the performance of one's duties, a man gained a broader human experience, and consequently a truer human perception of life by which the knowledge gained from books can alone be truly tested. He would say in later years that the divorce of book-learning from action produced that intellectualism which is the form of knowledge without the vitalizing substance. Such knowledge he regarded as a mental luxury, but not the heart's need. But he not only insisted upon the need of " doing things " as a condition of vital knowledge : the things to be done must also be such as belonged to the common life of the community. He felt that no man can realize himself except in the society of his fellow-men, and

in fulfilling his part in the common life. The social consciousness he held to be a necessary adjunct to the individual consciousness for the perfection of personality and the discernment of the truth of life. Self-isolation he felt to be narrowing and sterilizing both intellectually and morally: and it was this instinctive conviction which made him ready at any time to take part in all common duties, not excepting the most ordinary and menial. With the same readiness he would throw himself whole-heartedly into the drudgery of parochial organization, and into the drudgery of the domestic life of his community. He would disdain no common duty which he was capable of discharging.

Another thing to be remarked about him was this: his character was essentially religious and all his outlook and purpose were religious. But his religion sat on him with the ease and intimacy of a well-fitting coat designed at once for usefulness and comfort: it expressed the man in his intimate personality and manifested itself diffusingly rather than abruptly, as an enveloping atmosphere rather than as a point in the landscape. And this was not from any lack of definiteness in his religious conceptions and convictions, but because with a perfect Catholic instinct he accepted the teachings of his Faith as the categories of existence and, as by the necessity of his being, was accustomed to link up all his experience with the revelations of the Catholic religion. And so between his faith and his experience of life there was a close companionship. Thus to him the Catholic revelation of the life of God was an illumination of the proper life of man as the image of the Creator; and on the other hand from his direct experience of the life of man, he passed searchingly to the study of God. This habit of viewing God and the world as it were in direct kinship, entered into his worship and piety. He lived, studied, and worked as in an

attitude of prayer, as one standing in the sanctuary where God dwelt, waiting for the perfect fulfilment of His Creation. The study-room and the playing-field, for example, were to him extensions of the church ; physical science an extension of theology ; the relations of men between themselves, an extension of man's relation with God. These accepted truths at times suggested logical difficulties which set him thinking and issued in periods of unravelling, strenuous thought ; but these occurring difficulties, whilst they stimulated his reason, never interrupted his habit of faith : a religious faith which presented no logical difficulty would itself have been the greater difficulty, since it would have been untrue to the felt mystery of his own personal life. And so in his religion he was as a man in his own home, imbued at once with the loyalty and the freedom of the domestic hearth.

But the same instinctive delicacy which withheld him from obtruding himself into the personal affairs of other men, also withheld him from exhibiting to public gaze those intimate pieties which belonged to his personal communion with God, and were therefore his own and God's secret. These he held in a close reserve, seldom confessing them even to his intimate friends ; and then only when taken unexpectedly or in some needful, unusual confidence. Of private devotions, in the ordinary sense, I believe he had but few. His piety lay too close to all his daily activities, to admit ordinarily of formal segregation. But there were certain Catholic loyalties which demanded in their special intensity more exclusive expression. His devotion to the Blessed Sacrament often drew him at nightfall to the altar when others had retired to rest ; and I doubt whether on his busiest days he omitted to say the rosary of our Blessed Lady.

I have thus summed up at the outset the man as I came to know him in the course of thirty years, during more than two-thirds of which period I was privileged to enjoy his intimate friendship. That friendship began when I sat under him as my professor of theology, and found in him one of those rare teachers whose lectures opened out wide fields of thought and challenged your thinking faculty ; whose personality was a moral stimulus shaming indolence or conceit ; and whose religious faith seemed to wed heaven and earth in fundamental harmonies.

Of such men as he, it is needful to have something of a complete picture in one's eye, if you are to understand their sayings and doings : since in them the personality is greater than the uttered word ; greater and more true. For their aspiration and search after life is often too swift and urgent to let them linger much over words : they utter the thought of the moment and pass on, leaving to others, if they so wish, the more ordered and logical exposition ; or they sow the seed which others must tend and reap. At times they are as the west wind which comes and goes, and leaves no sign of its passing save in the more vital feeling of all things it has touched in its passage : it has touched with life and that is its achievement. And for that the west wind is loved by men.

II

HARDLY had Father Alphonsus completed his course as a theological student when he was appointed lecturer in theology and director of the theological students of the English province of the Capuchin Franciscan friars. The appointment was happy as much for the man himself as for those who were placed under him ; it gave him freedom for special study, and the opportunity for that self-expression in which the active mind finds itself and progresses towards self-realization.

It very soon became evident that the young lecturer was no mere accountant of the schools. He straightway converted the lecture-room into an arena where thought struggled against thought with all the earnestness and vivacity of a conflict between vital forces. The dominant features of his lectures were their suggestiveness and power of stimulating the mind. At times his conclusions might be open to debate, especially when he touched on history and natural science : for he was not deeply read in history and his interpretation of historical events suffered in consequence ; whilst the mysteries of natural science would set his imagination to work and he was apt to strain its hypotheses beyond what they could reasonably bear. But he was aware of his lack of historical knowledge, and was frankly open to correction ; and in the handling of an argument based on natural science he usually was careful first to point out the ascertained facts and the generally

accepted hypotheses before he let himself free to revel in a more personal hypothesis. Yet even when his conclusions were most manifestly linked to his premises by only a slender thread, there frequently flashed forth in the treatment some searching intuition which set one's mind working or called a halt on some line of thought upon which the student was already pressing forward.

This, too, was characteristic of the man: he was quick to detect when some statement of his was mentally challenged by a student. Sometimes he would there and then give his challenger an opportunity to freely argue out the point; at other times he would call him aside after the lecture or invite him to his room, or occasionally to a walk in the evening, when he would discuss the problem, not as professor with student, but as two students might, with absolute freedom of speech on either side. Those informal discussions were perhaps the most fruitful to the student in intellectual gain; and one never went away from them, even when one had successfully held one's ground, without a heightened respect both for the lecturer's intellect, and for the man himself. For then he would unconsciously reveal the high moral purpose which lay behind all his intellectual work; and the student would realize more vividly how with him the goal of all study was the unselfish fulfilment of the life-work to which a man is divinely called. I remember one such evening walk. He had been lecturing upon the evidences of Babylonian or Assyrian archæological discoveries in reference to the Biblical accounts of Pre-Israelitish times; and he had set forth his argument with the fervour of illumination which made his lectures so entrancing. But there was some assertion against which my immature mind had strongly rebelled. Though I had not spoken my thoughts, he evidently had detected the

challenge, and late that evening he asked me to walk out with him. He at once broached the subject of the lecture and invited argument. It was a clear February evening with the stars in their glory over our heads ; Sirius flashing emerald, glorious above them all. Suddenly as we were in the open road he stopped and stood gazing at the sky ; and into his voice came a subdued note as when one is worshipping at a shrine ; and for the rest of the walk, his argument was thrilled with the sense of that which is beyond man's words and even man's self ; he was manifestly gazing in spirit upon the divine mystery which upholds the human race and all created things, and had passed from logical argument into the scrutiny of faith. How the argument ended I cannot tell, but I have never forgotten how on our return home, I turned to my theological books with a feeling that behind the written words was a true science of life.

He could not be called a good tutor, though he was a superb lecturer and might have become famous, had he been called to a more public chair of theology. Though he never spared any labour to fulfil his dual task of tutor and lecturer during the years he taught theology, the tutorial side of his work was not altogether satisfactory. It was an evident effort when he set himself to guide his students through their text-books : he was then like a soul held in leash ; and with the best will in the world, he could never bring himself to the mental attitude of students to whom the text-book is the rock of refuge ; consequently these rather suffered by his tutoring, so far as knowledge of their books went. Generally he prefaced his lectures with a reading of those pages of the text-book upon which he was to lecture ; dwelling upon the more important passages and explaining as he went along ; but it was with a perceptible motion of relief that he closed the book, and took up his

own notes ; and then, for those who could follow him, began an hour or an hour and a half of intensely stimulating thought. As I write I have before me the notes of his series of lectures on the Church. The first lecture is an examination of Dr. Pusey's theory of the Unity of the Church. Some quotations will perhaps give an idea of his method of developing his lecture ; and exhibit the blending of moral fervour and clear, critical insight and the bold handling of his subject which gave to his lectures their special value as an education in thought.

The first lecture begins thus : " Before entering upon this subject it will be well, I think, to cast a glance back at the Divine idea realized in history, by which Christ still mystically lives in the world. Who can contemplate unmoved this visible Kingdom of Christ, ever indivisibly one, which has lasted now near nineteen hundred years, and is still full of strength as when it was first planted upon the capitol of Rome ; which embraces peoples of Europe, Asia, Africa and America within its far outlying boundaries ; which is attracting to itself genius the most exalted, and hearts the most noble ; which, comprising so many millions of men, compels them in virtue of its authority to speak one language, believe one creed, live by the grace of the same Sacraments, worship at one altar and yield implicit obedience to one visible head ; which has always been growing by accretion from without and by a Divine assimilation from within ; whose theology and moral science has been majestically developing in perfectedness of form with the growth of centuries ; harmoniously one like the many voices of the Divine attributes ; a kingdom wonderful in its beginning, wonderful in its growth, most wonderful in the promise with which the nineteenth century, despite the efforts of its enemies and perhaps their temporary success,

encircles her brow as with an aureola of glory; a glory rising like the northern lights from Europe and America and beginning to blush athwart the distant sky of the Far East and spring up anew amongst the devastated churches of nearer Asia. From this vision of beauty, we will turn to examine Dr. Pusey's substitute for the Catholic Church."

Such an exordium might seem unpropitious for a critical examination of Dr. Pusey's theories: yet quite easily and without effort the lecturer's notes pass into the right critical tone. First there comes a series of propositions in which Dr. Pusey sets forth his principles. The propositions are given in Dr. Pusey's own words, here and there with a brief comment which shows the lecturer anxious not to take advantage of any chance ambiguity of thought or language. In fact, Father Alphonsus, like Cardinal Newman, always endeavoured to find out the strength of his opponent's position and to do battle with him upon the ground most advantageous to the opponent. Having thus put Dr. Pusey as it were in possession, he then proceeds to examine and criticize. In clear, careful words Father Alphonsus notes where he agrees with his opponent, and also "where we must part company". Here is an example of this style of argument. "Dr. Pusey says that this faith is kept alive more by prayers than by definitions. There can be no doubt that here he is referring to objective faith, that is, faith in its relation as object to subjective faith. But this strikes at the root of all dogmatic theology. The Apostles' Creed is nothing if not a collection of definitions. All the creeds of the Church are the same. Definition has always been the weapon of the Church against heretical doctrine. Was it the idea of the Council of Nicea that faith is kept alive more by prayer than by definitions, when it convulsed the whole world on the question of the addition or omission of one

iota ? or of any of the Fathers who engaged in great controversies ? Surely if the external word is the sensible expression of the mind, if language is the expression of ideas, the profession of the faith, so far as it is an object of belief, must depend on definitions." Throughout the notes he continually refers to Dr. Pusey's confusion of objective faith with subjective faith. And he asks : "Would Dr. Pusey admit that a sect is Catholic, which whilst formally denying a doctrine of faith which the Church holds as essential, yet in the chaos of its first creation retains some Catholic prayers or some shadow of its liturgy ? I think he would not defend such a proposition thus presented in its nakedness. But the thirty-nine articles were awkward things to get over, and consequently he is compelled to make the most of the prayer-book." But this conclusion follows upon a close examination of Dr. Pusey's propositions.

The concluding lecture of the series on the Church deals mainly with Professor Seely's *Ecce Homo*, a book which was still widely read when these lectures were delivered. First, then, he gives a general review of the genesis of the naturalistic school of religious thought in Europe : after which he introduces *Ecce Homo* in these words : "Among the many books which have been written on this subject [the discrediting of supernaturalism by modern science] the author of *Ecce Homo* appears to me to merit special attention. Wide knowledge, broad sympathies, keen and delicate perceptions, freedom from party and personal ends, such go to make the man who stands before me as a peculiarly able exponent of this phase of modern thought. What such a man thinks of the religious outlook is sure to be interesting, and whether we agree with him or not, he is sure to be suggestive. I shall therefore first see what his thought is on this subject, and then I will deal with it in my own way."

Then, as in the case of Dr. Pusey's book, we get a careful marshalling of the author's points of view ; and following that, a detailed criticism characteristic of his methods of dealing with the big questions which were moving the thinking world of the day. For he always endeavoured to find the exact moving force in the theories which were leading men to take up the positions they held ; and at times in order to make his students appreciate the real motive power of a theory, he would throw himself into the attitude of mind of the men he was about to criticize and argue their point with a persuasiveness derived from his real sympathy with what he held to be an honest endeavour to arrive at the truth. Thus he sums up the main argument of *Ecce Homo :* " Religion he [Prof. Seely] understands to be some ardent condition of the feelings ; habitual and regulated admiration and worship of whatever in the known universe appears worthy of worship. To have an individuality is to have an ideal ; and to have an ideal is to have an object of worship ; and that is religion. Religion then in this sense is enthusiasm for something ; but in particular it is the enthusiasm of morality, which is the religion of righteousness ; or the enthusiasm of art, which is the religion of beauty ; or the enthusiasm of science, which is the religion of law and truth. Art and science are not secular : it is a fundamental error to call them so ; they have the nature of a religion. For the artist, the popular Christianity of the day is too melancholy ; for the scientist, it is too sentimental ; therefore they become dissenters from the existing religion of Christianity. But they separate from the religious bodies around them only because they have found a purer and happier religion. Surely there is in this something to enamour you. Do you not think that things might be better if thus readjusted ? and that after all, these

seeming heretics are the true evangelists ? " Then follows the answer to his own pleading. It begins : " We all are apt to indulge in the ideal, and I take it as an evidence of the happiness for which we were created that men should thus live in an ideal world. But let us come from the abstract to the concrete and steady our mental vision by looking at facts as they are. Would the author of *Ecce Homo* admit that Theophile Gautier enjoyed a purer religion or that Schopenhauer was made happier ? " From this reflection he passes to examine the arguments of *Ecce Homo* in detail ; comparing this " new religion " point by point with Catholic Christianity. He finds that the religion of *Ecce Homo* is " a compound of pantheistic positivism and Christian sentiment " ; its dogmas, " if one may use the word," fine phrases which will not bear the burden of human experience ; and he notes the confession of the author of *Ecce Homo* that pessimism is " the besetting difficulty of Natural Religion ". Next he comes to what he considers the crucial question : " Is there a need for such a substitute for Christianity ? " In the course of this part of his lecture he calls as witnesses a number of the most forcible exponents of naturalistic thought, from Stuart Mill to Haeckel, and examines their theories ; on the side of Christianity he marshals St. Augustine, St. Anselm and other Fathers ; bringing one side to play upon the other. He frequently refers to Cardinal Newman's writings. At length he arrives at the conclusion that whatever is true and inspiring in the aspirations of the Naturalists is to be found in Christian teaching. But he confesses that the appearance of the Naturalist movement in the world, is a call to Christians to take a more serious intellectual interest in the teachings of the Church, and still more to exhibit that teaching in their lives. Frequently indeed he would conclude his

lectures with some practical reflection of this sort: to him heresy and schism and infidelity often pointed to some moral weakening or slackness amongst Catholics themselves. And so, both from the living imaginative handling of his thesis, from his appreciative and broad criticism of the error he was dealing with, and from his way of bringing home some practical lesson to the students themselves, his lectures acquired forcefulness and incisive energy; and were at once intellectually and morally stimulating. Sometimes the very wealth of his illustrations and arguments were mentally confusing, especially as he spoke rapidly and without pause. Not infrequently at the end of a lecture which lasted an hour and a half, one felt a certain physical reaction of weariness after the tense effort to keep up with the flow of his thought. Occasionally noting this, he would abruptly break up his class and propose a walk in the garden, or start a discussion upon some trivial incident of the day. But oftentimes he would go straight from the lecture-room in an abstracted mood and you would afterwards find him thinking out some new line of thought which had occurred to him during the lecture.

His habit of choosing out some notable leader in the school of thought he had to deal with—a leader who in his opinion represented the cause not necessarily in its most popular aspect, but in what seemed to him its sanest and most forcible aspect—undoubtedly gave a certain dramatic interest to the discussion. But he would never set himself to criticize unless he had carefully read and studied a man's theory in his own books. He always felt that he was dealing with a man of straw when he had to rely upon text-book quotations for his knowledge of an opponent's opinions or arguments, and could work up no enthusiasm for the fray. Moreover, he had a courteous deference for men who had

taken an earnest part in the battle of religious thought, however widely he might differ from their principles and conclusions; and he shrank from attributing to them opinions which he must stigmatize as irreligious or immoral, unless he had convinced himself by a study of their works that they really held such opinions. In his controversial lectures he had a sense of dealing with personalities as much as with abstract principles: the men he chose as his opponents were to him living men. He considered that theological thought was not as the science of mathematics, an impersonal thing, but a struggle of men's souls towards their fatherland. He argued with the religious opinions of men, as he would argue with a man himself who came to him, earnestly debating some vital question of religion; that is to say, he saw behind the argument a soul seeking light; and this habit added much to the moral earnestness and spiritual forcefulness of his lectures.

In after years I came to think of him as a lecturer after the heart of those first and greatest of the lecturers in the mediaeval Franciscan school of Oxford, Grosseteste and Adam Marsh, of whom it is said that their lectures always had a practical, moral purpose, and were conceived in the spirit of men who jealously regarded academic study as a preparation for the preaching of the Gospel. Certainly one felt that with Father Alphonsus the solicitude of the pastor of souls directed the shafts of the lecturer; and it was a solicitude as universal in its sympathy as the race of men.

III

Father Alphonsus was one of those teachers whose pupils look back upon them in after years as companions and guides in the ways of knowledge rather than as scholastic drill-sergeants. Mechanical knowledge was a thing entirely repugnant to him : his ideal was that students should think for themselves and assimilate what they learned into their own personality. He held that a man only had as much real knowledge as he had made his own by reflection and personal judgment : the rest he considered mere servile repetition. It might assist a man for purely external work, but it would not build up the man himself : and this he would insist was the proper goal of study. For this reason it was, I think, that he instinctively did not make his lecture a finished piece of work, but left much for the individual working out of the student. He would lay down general lines of argument and indicate essential principles and suggest openings for thought, and then expect the student to work out the details for himself. He did not come to the lecture-room, as it were, with a complete dissertation in his hands. He invited intelligent thinking, and did not consider that he fulfilled his duty in encouraging mere memorizing either of the text-book or of his own lectures. With a certain ironical banter he would sometimes hold up a student's essay before the class as an " admirable copy of the author ". At other times he would hand over an essay with a gesture of intense weariness, remarking : " I have

waded through all this writing and have not found a thought in it ". Or again, he would ask a student to read his essay before the class, and as the reading went on, Father Alphonsus would call in question its text-book assertions to the student's uncomfortable confusion. But he would always deal sympathetically with the most hopeless argument if he detected in it any attempt to get at the idea behind the words.

But his conception of true education went beyond the development of the reflective faculty. This was but one element in a man's being : and education, he held, must develop the whole man, heart and mind. He was profoundly convinced that the moral aspect of education can never be divorced from the intellectual, if the result is not to be human chaos ; nor would he admit that moral and intellectual development can be run on lines separate from each other. The moral and the intellectual, he held, are closely interwoven and react upon each other. Intellectual training therefore is ultimately moral training, and moral training must affect the intellectual. Hence in directing the studies of his students, he instinctively kept in view the purpose to which as Franciscan friars they were dedicated. This purpose, he considered, must not only determine the definite subjects of their studies, but even more insistently give tone to their thought.

The course of studies for a Franciscan friar is to some extent marked out by canon law and the laws of the Order : but it admits of wide modifications and additions according to particular circumstances and personal aptitude. From the very outset when he was appointed lecturer in theology, Fr. Alphonsus recognized that the accepted text-books were inadequate in their range of subject-matter for the training of a priest who, like the Franciscan friar, is called

upon to deal with the actual world of thought and action ; and he set himself laboriously to supply their deficencies. Later on when he was elected to govern the English province, he made a brave effort to co-ordinate the studies in the Order with the exigencies of the present-day world. But throughout, whether as lecturer or as Provincial Minister, his work as an educationist was directed to the producing of the efficient Franciscan priest who would carry on the best tradition of the Order in one or other of the varied fields of Franciscan activity. As we have already remarked, he had no enthusiasm for " knowledge for knowledge' sake " ; but he had a real and fervent enthusiasm for knowledge in so far as it helps a man to realize himself in his work. Perhaps it will seem that such a definition of desirable knowledge must tend to an unwholesome narrowness of mind. But as he conceived the idea, it directs rather than limits the freedom of a man's study ; it concentrates a man's thought upon those matters which are, or should be, of real interest to him in the upbuilding of his own proper life. The particular objects of study, however, necessarily bear a relationship to the mind of the individual, as well as to the general purpose of the community : only, whether in the pursuit of the common courses, or if in individual study, the ultimate goal must be the realizing of oneself in the vocation or moral ideal to which a man's conscience or religious sense impels him. Cut off from that goal, study and knowledge dissipate the moral personality and sterilize character. Thus when in the capacity of Superior, he widely extended the educational scheme of his province of the Order, he was quite definite in his own mind as to the desirable ultimate result. " Our friars," he said, " must be made to realize the possibilities of their vocation as Franciscans in the world we live in, and to do that they must

be *men* intellectually and spiritually. His ideal as he frequently expounded it, was that of a realized manhood dedicated to religion in Franciscan poverty and missionary activity: and this ideal he put in the forefront of his educational scheme and propounded with a ceaseless energy.

The same fundamental ideas he brought to bear upon the general question of national education, when as a working priest in London he had to deal with this matter. He was not enamoured of our public elementary school system. It substituted, he said, instruction for education: and that he considered its first deficiency. The youthful mind was being crammed with book knowledge, but little was being done to train the thinking faculty or to develop the high moral sentiments by which a man's soul is formed and given a character. Speaking publicly on this subject in 1899, he declared: "So successfully had instruction ousted the idea of education that even those whom, from their position and attainments, one would suppose to be capable of taking a deeper view of the situation, were endangering the very sources of our national life by jeopardizing the moral forces which have made England a nation amongst the peoples of the earth". This, he considered, was the most vital school question of the day which "with a singular confusion" was neglected by the contending parties in the school war. What was the object of national education but "to make good citizens, people helpful to one another and full of an abundant patriotism"? If it failed to do this, education from the national standpoint was worse than useless: it was destructive. He pleaded, then, for a reconstruction of educationist ideals to the end that the nation should lay more store by the development of character and moral sentiments. Again in a sermon preached towards the end of the following year, he laid down this

trenchant principle : " The object of education should be not so much to enable a man to obtain a livelihood, though this is itself a necessary consideration—but rather to teach a man to live ". But the system in vogue was doing neither of these things : on the one hand it was giving youth an unpractical knowledge which did not tend to action ; on the other, it supplied no ethical impulse. The root of the evil he found in the tendency to divorce religion from secular knowledge. " Unless the idea of God entered largely into the formation of the mind, the selfish instincts of the man will predominate ; since it was only by opposing to our instincts something sufficiently powerful to counterbalance them, that obedience to a higher law was made at all possible. It might be said that some men appreciated the beauty of virtue and the odiousness of vice sufficiently enough upon abstract principles, to ensure obedience to certain moral precepts. Well, they were the few : for the majority of men this neither had formed the motive of action in the past, nor would it in the future. As well ask them to find out for themselves the first principles of Euclid or astronomy ! Religion alone could give an intelligible philosophy to mankind and a sufficient motive which would enable them to practise morality ; and when religion was removed from the curriculum of education, a loss was inflicted on the child and the nation, which no secular philosophy could ever make good." In another public lecture he declared that the whole object of education, as a Christian understood it, was to train the affections towards God. Unless the affections as well as the mind are educated, the result must be moral chaos. " We cannot stay the latent energy of these impelling forces [the affections]. They are ever growing, ever increasing in awful intensity ; and if they centre not upon a legitimate object, then they must

upon an illegitimate object. . . . Rightly ordered, these affections were messengers of light, but apart from their legitimate object, they were messengers of darkness. The principle by which Christianity remedied the evil was by presenting Christ."

These principles thus set before the public at a time when the country was much agitated over the elementary school question, were the reflection of the convinced spirit in which he had set himself to train his own friar-students. Even theology might become a mere secular education if it did not lead the affections towards God, and would sink to a mere system of instruction unless it was a means of fostering character and the sense of moral responsibility. But, on the other hand, he felt that the more a man is fitted intellectually for the work which his vocation entails, the fuller a man he will be and the more apt to exert his moral and religious sense.

His words, just quoted, as to the twofold object of education, namely: "to enable a man to obtain a livelihood" and yet more "to enable him to live," express tersely his mind on this subject. If for the words "to obtain a livelihood" (the phrase was used in reference to the working-classes) we substitute "to fulfil the immediate external activity for which he is destined," we get at his more fundamental idea. On the one hand the object of education is set by the demand of the external circumstances in which a man's life is cast; on the other, by the yet more imperious demand of his own soul to realize its spiritual ideal. Both are legitimate and necessary objects of education; but the latter the more necessary and ennobling. Holding, as he did, that education had to deal with the moral faculty as well as with the intellectual, that its object was "to teach a man not merely to talk and

criticize, but to act and be himself," Father Alphonsus did not consider that a man's education was accomplished in the schoolroom or the lecture-hall. Youth must be trained in actual service of the community : such service would not only train the affective and moral nature of the man ; it would also serve to widen his mental horizon, and act as a corrective to the mental conceit which is apt to narrow the judgment of the purely academic scholar. Hence as the director of the theological students in his earlier days, he would never dispense them from the daily services which blend together the individuals of a community in a common interest, nor from those mutual assistances which mean so much in the community's life. He was a great believer in the educational value of *esprit de corps* and the interdependence which it implies ; he laid stress upon the moral and mental gain to the individual from working with others for the common good. He considered that the self-restraint demanded by co-operation gave definiteness to individual character, whilst the mutual assistances of the common life brought men into more intimate touch with each other, and developed at once a larger sympathy and a deeper self-knowledge. With this end in view, he would encourage the voluntary collaboration of his students for some particular common purpose as, for example, the worthy celebration of some Church festival, which he would leave to their own initiative and responsibility. I remember the zest and self-abandon with which he would join in our choir-practices, he himself being for the time but one of the choir, and deferring to the judgment of the student who was choir-director. Within the lines laid down by the rules or traditional customs of the Order, he fostered a wide measure of self-government in the class and in the individual, believing that thereby the student would gain in the sense of

personal responsibility and voluntary self-submission to principle and law. Instinctively he seemed to realize that sublime conception of obedience which St. Francis proclaimed as "a voluntary serving, one of the other, in charity". Such obedience he held to be the very consecration of individual liberty: and with a constant patience he sought to elicit it in those under his charge. Yet he was in no sense a weak disciplinarian. He would tolerate no wilful disregard of the laws, nor disrespect for traditional customs: but he had a subtle power of silently impressing one with the sanctity of laws and customs, which is a rare gift amongst men. You felt that these things were with him not mere instruments of an external orderliness but the expression of some sacred force in life. A particular rule, taken by itself, might not commend itself to his judgment; but in as far as it was an act of that authority which is one of the elements of common life, he would accept it loyally. As to traditional customs, they brought him into touch with the historical past, and stood in some measure for the experience and wisdom of the men who have lived. Even when he considered that new circumstances rendered an ancient custom inoperative for the purpose for which it had existed, he yet would not regard it irreverently. Most customs which had imbedded themselves in the life of a people, and been accepted with respect or affection, held some wisdom or moral beauty, which a loyal reverence would extract and carry over into new methods and systems. And thus with an unusually open mind as to the necessity of change in details of the common life, he united an unswerving loyalty of affection for whatever had held a place in the life of the past: and the inculcation of this respect and loyalty he held to be a needful element in right education. Men, in his view, were not isolated units, but links

in the chain of human history ; they could truly and nobly develop their individuality and their common life only as they recognize themselves to be trustees for the past in their building up of the future.

But perhaps his intimate reverence for authority and the traditions of the past, impressed itself upon us with an actual sense of freedom because in his conception of obedience there was so manifestly a scope for the exercise of well-ordered personal initiative and of personal responsibility for the common good ; and because, too, his affection for traditions so evidently went hand in hand with the instinct to deal manfully and open-mindedly with the duties of the present and the promise of the future. In him loyalty to authority and tradition never set a term to the activity of the spirit, but was rather its starting-point on personal quest and adventure. The man who in disgust at the interference of authority, ceased personal effort and the exercise of his own legitimate judgment, was to him a traitor to the corporate life ; or one of low moral vitality. Obedience loyally given, he held, might define the lines of action but would never stop the flow of personal activity except where character itself is lacking. And as to this he had a word of warning to those in charge of the young. " You can never have true and wholesome obedience to authority," he once declared, " apart from character and the power to act." Consequently he held as an altogether false system of education that which seeks to enforce a habit of obedience to the law whilst neglecting to foster those habits of self-initiative and personal responsibility which are essential to the realization of personal character. It was a system which he held to be largely responsible for the difficulties of the Catholic body in certain countries where the sense of personal activity seemed to him strangely divorced from the

sense of obedience, and where in consequence an energetic minority in rebellion against the Church are able to dominate at their will the majority who adhere to the Church. On the one side he saw a tyrannous self-assertive minority, rioting in a consciousness of power because undisciplined by moral and religious principle; on the other was the ineffectiveness of a training in obedience, which takes too little account of the essential freedom of the soul. This freedom authority is set to guide: to destroy it only leads to ultimate disaster. The divorce of the two fundamental principles of right human conduct, namely obedience and freedom, was destructive in his eyes at once of moral individuality and of society. But of this we shall have more to say elsewhere: here we refer to it merely to show what his view was as to the training of youth.

Finally, as bearing upon his conception that education must be a training and development of the personality, he would not at any time lay any hard-and-fast restrictions upon a student as to his method of study, or even as to the subject of study itself. He recognized the need for the play of individuality in the acquisition of knowledge, and the development of the mind. The lines he set for study were never so rigid that a student might not forage for himself down subsidiary streams of thought; and he had a deeply felt satisfaction when a student showed a tendency to bring his reading or thinking on widely divergent subjects to bear upon the exposition of the particular subject under discussion. And for that reason, he was liberal in putting books into the hands of his students, for which they showed some preference; so long as the result was manifest in a deepening or widening of thought or character. He had, too, a settled belief in the influence of art for the refinement of the sensibilities, and consequently for the development

of the more delicate perceptions of both intellectual truth and moral verities. When in after years he was working as a priest in a London parish and had set himself to deal with the problem of elementary school education, he formed a boys' choir, believing that a close acquaintance with good music would do much for the boys' intellectual and moral development.

Altogether, as an educationist, he was wise beyond the generality of teachers, and his theory was the more consistent because it was drawn from the wealth of his own personal instinct and experience. And perhaps it was as an educationist that his influence was most powerfully felt by those who sat under him. In other ways he was indeed a man exceptional in moral force and clear intellectual insight and personal courage : but often he acted impulsively and tentatively and as one searching the ground. But in the training of youth, he was always sure and consistent.

IV

Absorbing as seemed his interest in educational work in those early days of his lectureship, Father Alphonsus was yet at heart the missionary friar. He looked out wistfully upon the world in which many of his religious brethren were engaged in missionary activities amongst the poor and the working population, especially in the larger towns where life is more intense and the religious and social problems of the day more in evidence. It was for this labour that he was consciously training his students : and the purpose was never far from his thoughts. At times he was restless to be free to take a part in the actual fray. I remember how on one occasion he entered the lecture-room with the current number of a monthly magazine in his hand. From the alertness of his movements and the tense expression of his countenance we knew that the morning's lecture would be stimulating, and we were prepared for a discourse vivid and even passionate. Turning the pages of the magazine, he announced that before proceeding with the appointed lecture, he would read to us an article from the pen of a Catholic priest who was at once a literary critic of repute, and an advanced thinker on social questions. The burden of the article, said Father Alphonsus, was a prophetic call to the Church and he hoped it would not fall upon deaf ears in that room. Then, with a melodious cadence and passionate earnestness, the writer's words were poured out to us. They told of the spiritual destitution of the masses of

the people in modern England, and yet contended that this people, without faith and seemingly indifferent to Church and creed, were yet ready to receive the Gospel, if only it were brought home to their daily lives in intelligible phrase. Christian teaching did not touch the poor with conviction because it was uttered in a language they did not understand, and because the Christian teachers stood too far apart from the heart and understanding of the multitude. The article was in fact another phrasing of the Gospel message: "Go ye into the highways and byways and compel them to come in". The Church must go to the people and utter its saving doctrine in the language of the people's struggles and fears and hopes: and, concluded the writer, the people would not be found unresponsive to her teaching. Father Alphonsus made no comment when he had finished the reading: none was needed. His whole soul was in the words as he read them: pity and yearning hopefulness were in his voice, and a passionate pleading with us students to take the message to heart.

So when after some years he was transferred from the lecture-room to a mission house of the Order, in the midst of a population mostly poor, whatever regret he may have felt at relinquishing the office of lecturer, was mingled with a deep satisfaction at being able to realize his vision of a priestly apostolate amongst the struggling masses in the towns. He at once threw himself with all his restless energy into the various labours of the parochial missioner, and very shortly was conversant with the life of the slums and alleys which hide themselves from the view of the casual visitor to the ancient city in which he was now placed. He was both a ministering friend to the slum dwellers and an observant critic of the conditions of their life. Nor did he ever lose hold of his idealism in all his experience of the

sordidness and demoralization of the back alley where many families crowd into one miserable tenement. He went to and fro, with eyes searching for the flickering spiritual lights and the spiritual struggles which give the religious worker his opportunity. The squalor and irrationality of the life he moved amongst, at times revolted him : it jarred upon his fine conception of human life, and not infrequently in the earlier days of his enterprise he returned to the friary in a tumult of hot anger or contradiction. Moments of depression also came to him as the helplessness of the slum-dwellers and the apparently inevitable fatality of their lot swept down upon him. But soon he would be back amongst them ministering to their spiritual and temporal needs : taking in hand the difficulties of a family without work, or the yet greater difficulties of a man who was in the grip of vice. He could be tender and unflaggingly solicitous, but he could be also a stern monitor ; he was always forceful and somewhat imperious, the strong man battling for the weak ; yet always pitiful, and watchful, and untiringly patient. No detail of individual need was too petty for his solicitude.

However full his day might be with the various activities which fall to the lot of the parochial priest, he seldom failed to spend some hours visiting in the slums : and always the slums remained to him a wonderland. Out of the grey mist of material discomfort and mental poverty there came to him new experiences of the workings of the human soul, new visions of man's latent capacities for fear and hope, nobility and ignominy ; but on the whole he was impressed most with the hope and nobility. And that gave him a real reverence for the slum-dwellers, and led him afterwards to declare that what they needed most was not so much material relief as spiritual instruction : the human spirit

was commonly there repressed but not without vigour, only awaiting its freedom. Indeed I have heard him say that the poverty of the slum was less enervating to the souls of men than was the luxury of the very rich : of the two conditions, he would prefer the former. This conviction, I think, explains a certain lightsome buoyancy of spirit which underlay his most serious moments in dealing with the problems and difficulties of his daily visitings. There was the frolic of real faith in the boyish laugh with which he would at times recall his adventures, and in the gay humour in which he would set out to attack some grimy task. After a time he had come to have a true belief in the latent spiritual vitality to be found in the slums, even whilst he was realizing more and more clearly the adverse conditions which weighed down the lives of the bravest to be found there and plunged the weaker ones into a revolting squalor—mental as well as material.

From the northern city he was eventually sent to work in a district of South London, and here he found a wider field for his activity and his study of human conditions. In this mission-area he still had to deal with slum-life : but at the same time he came into closer acquaintance with the regular working-class. With this class he found that the great problem was not merely to live, but to live intelligently. The vast majority of working-men may give very little thought to matters which lie outside their immediate vision or felt need ; and even then, may not think very profoundly. But they are at least open to the influence of thought. They are apt, it is true, to swallow ready-made opinions upon religious and social questions with a marked preference for whatever is newest, so long as it apparently tends to emancipate the working-man from the old order of things : but intelligence is at work amongst them directly

or indirectly, and they are consciously stretching forward to some ideal of individual and class liberation. Here, however you may judge of their aims or achievements, you have a people alive with something more than the instinctive desire to exist; and to Father Alphonsus there was something fascinating in the fact of a vast body of men striving consciously to realize some intelligent purpose, whatever it might be. A living movement was to him at once a stimulant and a tonic. He was never timid in the face of a crowd.

It is, moreover, evident from his public discourses that he quickly came to the conclusion that the working-man is the pivot upon which the society of the immediate future will turn. In the life of the working-class the ineffective life-struggle of the slum meets with the philosophic intellectualism of a more leisured class of thinkers; and the result is revolution. The philosopher's conclusions as understood and expressed by the working-man may seem crude to the philosopher himself: but to the working-man they are hard convictions, dogmas of faith and motives for action.

What most struck Father Alphonsus was the keen intellectual interest of large numbers of working-men, especially of the younger generation, in religious questions, and the influence upon them of the naturalistic interpretation of religion. He was hardly prepared for this. As he had studied the new naturalism in books, it had come to him as the product of a revived, æsthetical sense allied to moral earnestness; and he had thought of it with academic audiences in the background. But amongst the working-class he found it the argument of a new social and individual morality divorced from dogmatic Christianity, lacking the attractiveness of its æsthetic setting, but a keen weapon for the overthrow of existing religious institutions. Amongst

the philosophers the Naturalistic interpretation spelt æstheticism ; amongst the working-class, mere secularism.

As he pondered upon the situation, the conviction came to him that if the people at large were to be saved to dogmatic Christianity, it was urgently necessary that the gospel of secularism should be attacked and combated with unremitting energy, not merely in the schools or before academic students, but amongst the mass of the people. Too long, he concluded, the clergy had treated the anti-Christian philosophy as a matter to which the people at large were strangers, and so had allowed the secularist propaganda to gain ground which must now be recovered laboriously and with frequent discouragement. Quick as he always was to act upon his convictions, he now set himself to preach on every possible occasion the claims of dogmatic Christianity as against the growing secularist domination : and this subject forms the almost unvarying theme of the many reported sermons which belong to this period of his missionary labour. He once confessed that at first he found a difficulty in taking this course because of the character of the congregations to which he had to preach. To the large body of Catholics, secularism was but an echo from an outer world : it meant practically nothing to their conscious life. They were not troubled by it, and therefore took no interest in it. Yet, on the other hand, Father Alphonsus knew well that even in a Catholic congregation were some, more particularly amongst the younger men, to whom the secularist theories they heard spoken about amongst their fellows in the street or workshop were troublesome to faith and loyalty : and he was conscious that unless their souls were satisfied, the trouble would spread. And again, all unconscious of the danger as most Catholics were, the atmosphere around them was impreg-

nated with the anti-Christian spirit and must eventually affect the faith of the younger generation unless the Catholic body was aroused to the danger. Moreover, he held that the priest's mission is not merely to his Catholic congregation but to the nation at large, and that it behoved him as a faithful minister to lift up his voice, in prophetic warning at least, against the de-Christianizing of the national life. For all these reasons he held on his course. Yet it is noticeable that after a time his sermons became more and more burdened with a warning message to Catholics themselves, to take heed to safeguard their faith by practical measures against the insidious danger which surrounded them; and, above all, to brace themselves up to the task of securing the faith of their children to whom he foresaw the danger would be more actual than it was to the parents. This led him to throw himself with all his abundant energy into the controversy concerning the national system of elementary education. He was an uncompromising advocate for the denominational school: and this, upon broadly national grounds as well as from Catholic principle, as we shall see further on in this memoir.

At the same time, however, as he was combating the theory and influence of secularist thought, he gave serious consideration to the economic problems of the industrial class in so far as these were allied to moral conduct and the Christian ideal of society: and his pronouncements upon these questions revealed at once a clear, spiritual insight and a courage which would not shrink from the truth as he saw it. Some thought him overbold, yet none could seriously accuse him of misstating Catholic teaching: and to-day, though but a few years have passed, his boldest utterances are the commonplace of the Catholic platform.

I have heard it remarked that it was a pity a man of his

distinctly apostolic gifts—one who in all his thought and action was moved always by natural instinct to confront large questions and the wider problems—should have been tied down to the routine of parochial work with but comparatively few opportunities of reaching the larger audience he was so eminently fitted to address. True, his sermons in his own church attracted many from neighbouring parishes, especially the younger men to whom his heart went out with particular yearning ; and occasionally he would occupy the pulpit in other churches : but his parochial charge bound him to his own church, and he himself would not have had it otherwise. No man with his gift of oratory had less of the ambition to be an orator ; and no preacher of his powers was less fascinated by the glamour of the pulpit. He would as eagerly instruct an individual as address a crowd, and no manner of service was unwelcome to him. The routine work of a parish brought him more intimately into the lives of the poor and working-class than would otherwise have been the case : and it was an intimacy in which he found both instruction and delight. His heart was with the people over whom he had charge. None could doubt that who saw him, for example, amongst his choir-boys. That boy-choir was his own creation. It was designed primarily to prevent young lads leaving school from being drawn away from the Church by irreligious associates, and to form a sort of club for those who were too young to be admitted into the regular young men's club of the parish. It took the shape of a choir because Father Alphonsus thought that the musical training would be good for the characters of boys. The choir practices were varied at times by readings from selected authors such as would appeal to a boy's imagination. At other times he would take the boys to a picture gallery, himself being the guide. And for every boy he had an

individual care, lest the boy should stray from religious and moral principle during those critical years of early youth. With the school children, too, he was on the best of terms, going amongst them in the schoolroom and the playground with a simple ease and a conscious delight. And so his days were full with a varied activity, all governed by one intense purpose—the saving and upraising of the souls committed to his charge. For that he lived with a single and loyal mind, never allowing the thought of a more extended activity to turn him aside from the narrower field in which religious obedience had placed him.

And yet he had in a marked degree that instinct, prophetic in its quality rather than priestly, which marks off the preaching friar from the parish priest, and sends him forth as an evangelist into the arena where the world's religious ideas are being moulded, or places him as a sentinel at the danger-passes which guard the well-ordered Catholic life. His parochial duties never quenched that proper quality of the friar in Father Alphonsus : they were suffused with it, and dominated by it ; not from deliberate intention, but simply because he was what he was. His duteous ideal in the fulfilment of his parochial work was to manifest himself before God a true parish priest ; and such he was in no mean degree. Yet looking back upon those days one sees in him even more clearly the missionary friar with his fingers always upon the spiritual pulse of the larger world, and with his eyes searching even amongst the people of his particular charge for the key to the world's mysteries which were ever exercising his deeper thoughts.

V

As has been said, Father Alphonsus's preaching came to be chiefly concerned with the two vital questions which he found exercising the thoughts of the intelligent working-class ; namely, the religious question as formulated by the teachers of the naturalistic school of Thought, and the moral question implied in the new social and political ideals of the working-man. His method of dealing with these questions was characteristically constructive and persuasive rather than controversial. As in his theological lectures, so in his sermons, he would take up not so much the arguments of those he was opposing, as the thought behind the arguments. He would elicit, if he could, the felt need of the spirit which had set men thinking, and then hurry on to bring them the response to their need, as he himself felt it to be contained in Catholic teaching.[1] At times he would turn aside from his main purpose of convincing those who were attracted to the new fashions of thought, to point out the duties imposed on the Catholic body by the religious and social difficulties of the world at large : for, as we have

[1] Father Alphonsus was not accustomed to write out his sermons and public speeches. He left behind him at his death a copious bundle of "notes," which shows that he carefully thought out the question upon which he was to speak. But the "notes" are frequently unintelligible : consisting of a phrase or a word or an unfinished sentence. Happily a large number of his discourses were reported in the Catholic weekly papers. One London Catholic paper in particular was accustomed to send a reporter whenever Father Alphonsus was announced to speak in London.

already remarked, he was convinced that in the ultimate issue of these questions, the Catholic Church itself was on its trial before the world.

Of his attitude towards the prevalent naturalistic tendency in religious thought—the "New Humanism" he commonly styled it—we have had some indication in considering his method as lecturer in theology. It was at once appreciative and uncompromisingly antagonistic. There was that in him which responded gratefully to the moral earnestness of many of its protagonists and to their insistent appeal to the beauty of our Lord's personal character. Then, too, he was always drawn sympathetically to any stirring of the human spirit: the movement of life attracted him. Nevertheless he was profoundly convinced that naturalism was the fundamental error contending with historic Christianity for the allegiance of the professedly Christian world; and he regarded it as the more insidious just because of those qualities which made it attractive to earnest men in search of religion. That among its nobler exponents it was a search after religious truth, he had no doubt. "They would believe if they could" he once passionately exclaimed. Their doctrine might lend itself to all manner of moral obliquity, as it actually did in some notable cases; yet he was impressed by the sincerity with which men like Professor Seely believed that in the naturalistic teaching they were raising up a new witness to the Christ-life, and creating a basis for moral conduct. "Seldom in all the ages," he declared in one of his sermons, "has the moral character of Christ impressed itself with a vividness and reality as upon this age." But in divorcing the moral beauty of Christ from the transcendent position He holds in dogmatic Christianity, the new naturalism had no sufficient motive to give and no

objective reality to appeal to. In practice each individual must be his own authority for his moral conduct, and the ultimate goal of conduct was indefinite and uncertain. No wonder, he said, that the last note of the new naturalism was despair—a dread pessimism, as many of its adherents had to admit. Human nature cries out for a personal Being, infinitely perfect, whom it can adore and love; that is indeed the most fundamental cry of our nature. This adoration and love of the infinitely perfect Being is alone true religion: it alone can govern and consecrate the human heart and give it that hope of eternal life which it desires. Given this assured hope, the moral code of the Gospel becomes intelligible and acquires a sanction apart from the individual, and a certainty no individual opinion can ever have. In truth, as he would point out, the new Humanists were aware of the inadequacy of the individual to be the arbiter of his own conduct. Hence they set up the tribunal of "Nature as a Unity". "But," he asked, "what and where is 'Nature as a Unity'? Who can say with any approach to definiteness what nature commands?" Moreover, this deification of nature assumes that it is actually good: whereas in human nature as we know it the taint of evil is too evident.

This is, of course, the "practical" answer to the naturalistic philosophy: but, after all, morality is something very practical and must be tested by objective results.

But vehemently as he contended against the naturalist tendency of the time, he did not hold that the age was at heart irreligious. In truth, he was convinced that behind all the rebelliousness against dogmatic Christianity there was a real awakening of the religious sense. He thus put the situation: "Here is the paradox with which the Christian preacher has to deal: an age in sympathy with

religion is inveighing against its concrete expressions". This fact seemed to him both to add to the gravity of the danger and to give ground for an ultimate reconciliation of the Church and the modern spirit. It added to the danger because whilst absolutely irreligious men may inflict annoyances and distractions upon the Church, they will never shake the faith of the earnest believer or of the well disposed. But where the attack is led by men "who would believe if they could," then indeed one must look to the defences of the faith: for such men are not contending in their own minds against religion but for what they deem a purer religion; and that conviction—however false it may be in fact—gives to their attack the exultation of a religious purpose and by its very earnestness and moral vigour attracts the religiously inclined. Against the spirit which is working in such men, mere denunciation is futile: they will be subdued only when they are converted. And so it seemed to Father Alphonsus that the task which lay before the Catholic Church was to draw upon the treasury of her life and show herself as the true teacher and guide of the newly awakened religious instinct which was clothing itself with heresy for lack, as he believed, of a true knowledge of the doctrines of the Church.

That the Catholic Church could meet and convert the naturalistic movement by the simple presentment of her own inner mind and spiritual life, he never for a moment doubted: had he doubted, he would have held himself no true Catholic: for "Catholicism is the sum of all truth," he would say; and to him that belief was no mere ineffective truism. Every new theory of religion sent him to a further investigation of the Catholic faith; not as one doubting the faith, but as one convinced that in the faith he would find a fuller revelation of the truth for which the

outside inquirer was groping : and it was that belief which made him both fearless and sympathetic in his handling of the anti-Catholic schools of thought.

I have sometimes suspected that the tenacity with which he grappled with the naturalistic view of life was due to the fact that had he not so whole-heartedly believed in the Catholic faith, he might well have been drawn to the side of those with whom he did such persistent battle. There was undoubtedly much in their temperament which appealed to him. Their moral earnestness and worship of beauty attracted him : and if he could not throw in his lot with them it was because of a fuller satisfaction which the Catholic faith gave him. He would frequently exclaim in talking on this subject, "Catholicism is the true Humanism!" and indeed it was as the fulfilment of the "desire of the peoples" that the Catholic faith won his deepest loyalty and whole-hearted enthusiasm. As he beheld her, the Church was the final refuge of all the heart's mysterious aspirations, and the city of their purified achievements : and as one from the high ground might watch the rivers wending their devious courses towards the ocean, so would he, from the vantage ground of his faith, gaze upon the winding courses of the world's thought and desire, seeking evidences of their ultimate Catholic attainment. This conception of Catholicism as the consecration of all right human vitality finds expression in many of his discourses, but notably in one he gave on "the Catholicity of the Church" —a discourse full of suggestive thought. "Every society," he began, "is more or less an aspiration ; and the Church, if she is anything, is an enthusiastic aspiration to reclaim, verify, and consecrate every phase of our being, every act of man, every social relationship. Catholic in name, Catholic in nature, she aspires to the dominion of every

individual and of society, because she claims to be their interpretation and sanctification. Her home is in the wide world ; her sphere of action is wherever men are. Her redemptive mission is to make straight the ways of the world." The burden of his discourse following upon his exordium, was to show that in the Catholic Church two ideas meet and embrace, namely, created life and the divine. Catholicism is not a negation of the earth but its sublimer fulfilment in that mystical union of creaturely life with God which is supremely realized in the mystery of the Incarnation. The Catholic Faith indicates the divine purpose which runs through " all the jarring oppositions and collisions " which human science and experience reveals to us ; Catholic life is the summing up of all natural and supernatural verities which enter into the life of the world. There is therefore no truth in the world and no searching after truth, which is not properly Catholic : for " wherever truth is, there you will find Christ ; and wherever Christ is, there is the Church : this is the grand principle on which the dogma of Catholicity is grounded ". On the other hand, heresy is based on negation and lives by negation ; it cannot assimilate save to its own disintegration. But the Church founded in all truth rides confidently upon the changeful evolution of the world's life, gathering to herself whatever is true and good as her own rightful possession. And because this is so, the world " tends instinctively to become Catholic " ; though left to itself and apart from Christ and the Church which is the Voice of Christ, it gropes blindly and is unable to realize its aspiration.

In such fashion he constantly dwells upon the Catholic Church as the home of humanity, realizing man's proper destiny and desired perfection. And into that Catholic life as he beheld it, entered all those searchings after truth, all

those aspirations after a diviner life, which make at once the pain and joy of human history through all the ages.

The theologian will recognize in this presentment of the Church the influence of the doctrine of the Franciscan Duns Scotus concerning our Lord's Incarnation. The Scotist teaching had indeed a fascination for Father Alphonsus just because it regarded the Incarnation as "the point towards which all creation surged," and so whilst on the one hand he always thought of the Church as the *Civitas Dei* drawing to itself all vital spiritual life amongst men, on the other hand he saw in her "Christ manifesting Himself, and enduring for ever in all places as the Centre of Humanity".

His very loyalty to the Church impelled him to search sympathetically in all spiritual movements and upheavals for that truth towards which men were blindly moving. Mere falsity, he held, would never hold for long the allegiance of men nor even strike deeply into their convictions. However false a system or doctrine might be in the aggregate, if it really appealed to the consciences of men, it must be by some promise of a truth. Heresy can never realize this promise : only the Church can do that ; but the heresy can be vanquished only when the Church is known to possess the truth desired. The Church therefore must manifest the truth to the world so that men may clearly see it in her. But, further, all religious truth must manifest itself not as a mere intellectual affirmation but as a principle of practical life, carrying with it a rule for right conduct. Hence he declared that the most cogent argument for Catholicism would be found in the practical lives of Catholics themselves. They must live their faith in the teaching of the Church and not merely utter it in words. So only will they convert the world.

In one sense, he admitted, heresies indirectly tend to

build up the manifest life of Catholicism ; inasmuch as they force the Catholic people to consider more attentively the faith they profess, and to realize the spiritual life by which the Church lives. And so he thought that the new Humanism would eventually bring about, in spite of itself, a strengthening dogmatic Christianity. He was not of those who think that the last word has been uttered in expository theology, or that the last step in mystical devotion has yet been reached. The Church as the living organism of the Divine Spirit will continue to put forth new theological thought, new forms of devotion, and new ideals of Christian service, according to the need of the coming ages. "She is not a sphynx casting its silent shadow on the centuries as they pass by," but the living guide of a living world. And inasmuch as heresies cloak some demand of the world-spirit for further knowledge, the world will eventually receive from her an illuminating response ; and in so far as they represent a legitimate aspiration towards the religious life, they will evoke from her the desired reality. Too often legitimate religious aspiration is side-tracked by the impatience of men into heresy and schism ; as long before its condemnation by the Holy See, he foresaw was the case with the movement now known as Modernism, which he regarded as an abortive attempt to bring the new Humanism into harmony with Catholic teaching. The Modernist movement he held as an example of the wrong way to deal with the world's religious thought. Its fundamental intellectual error lay, as he believed, in its failure to recognize that all religious truth is *in* the Church and to be realized only by communion with the life of the Church : whilst in its attitude towards the authority of the Church he saw the evidence of a heretical temper which must eventually formulate heresies. Nevertheless he held that the

Humanist theories would be the occasion for further developments in Catholic theology ; and not only in theology, but in the devotional life of the Church. How these developments would take definite form, he was too wise to attempt to determine. Only the passing years with their accumulating experience and wisdom can fashion vital developments. But he was confident that the Catholic world was on the eve both of a vast expansion of theological thinking, and of a renewal of practical piety, which would make the Church once more resplendent as the confessed embodiment of the truth towards which the nobler religious spirits of the present world were blindly groping. If at the time the Humanists were winning to their side so many of the most earnest and thoughtful leaders of men, and dominating the mind of large masses of men—and they amongst the more vigorous and progressive in secular life—it was in no small measure due to the fact that Christianity as exhibited in the lives of a vast number of professed Christians, had lost much of its vital strength and beauty. Indifferentism, formalism and practical unbelief had laid their drab colours upon the garments of Christ. More than once we find him exclaiming sorrowfully : " The world is too much with us ! " when he was speaking of the present condition of Christian society ; and to this he attributed in large measure the free progress of the Humanist teaching.

But it was not only the worldliness within the Christian body which had given Naturalism its opportunity. Amongst Christians of true belief and sincere conviction, there was too frequently a lack of vigour and a failure to recognize the duty of the hour in regard to the world's need.

On one occasion, preaching on the responsibility which Catholics have towards the world at large, he asked : "Are

we meeting all the difficulties of a world which is fretting away its existence in an endeavour to find a substitute for God ? Are we speaking to this generation in its own tongue, and wisely directing the good impulse which is found in every widespread movement ? And if not, could we wonder at the large provinces of défeated endeavour which the Church mourned as lost ? Surely as one looks out upon the world, one must confess that Christianity has suffered some eclipse. The fault is not in the Faith nor in the means which lie ready to hand, but in a supine generation which says 'I come' and yet goes not." Some allowance must be made for the natural vehemence of the preacher, himself so restless to meet and deal with the problems of the day both for the world's salvation and for the defence of the Church. Nevertheless he felt truly, as most men will now admit, that the time was quick with big issues for the religious life of the nations, and that a supreme effort was called for on the part of the believing Christian people. Catholics especially must no longer be content to assert the authority of the Church ; they must make that authority effective : and to do this, they must enter into the world's thought and life, seek out the true and good " which lies at the back of all world-movements " and purify it of corrosive error. Then from out the very elements of disturbance would issue a new element of reconstructive vitality to Catholic society. So had it been in the past when the Church took over and purified the philosophy of the pagan schools, and again in the later Middle Ages when she made her own, but with a purer, more spiritual significance, the cry of the heretical reform movements for evangelical poverty. Energy and the movement of life, even when it comes up against her in the guise of a foe, the Church need never fear so much as the deadening of the spiritual sense ; since wherever there

is a quickening of soul, the Church has but to reveal herself in the majesty of the truth which is in her, to subdue and convert.

What then Father Alphonsus feared most were not the new religious and ethical theories with which dogmatic Christianity was being confronted, but the passivity of professing Christians who were either not awake to the real issues, or were content to utter ineffective protests. This passivity left the opponents of the Faith in the acknowledged position of leaders of thought and gave them authority with the masses of the people who are apt blindly to follow unchallenged leadership. And so the anti-Christian teaching was acquiring an influence over the people at large, as much on the strength of its unchallenged audacity as by its actual teaching. Were the anti-Christian leadership of progressive thought challenged in a language and habit of thought familiar to the people, the very challenge would call a halt in its progress and weaken its power with the people: as indeed we have now some evidence. For happily it can now no longer be said that the teachings of the Church are buried in formulas unintelligible to the multitude: an active propaganda is now at work to bring Catholic truth into the field of modern thought and life; and though the world is far from being converted, yet there are evidences that men, until lately contemptuous, are acknowledging its claim to be heard. Yet it is to men like Father Alphonsus that our first thanks are due, since but for their impelling advocacy we might yet be as those "who let the world pass by". In the more palpable achievements of those who come after them, these prophets of resurrection are apt to be forgotten: yet it is they who in their vision of faith and their high courage, have called the day out of night.

VI

As I have already remarked, Father Alphonsus would not admit that the English people at large were irreligious. They might be without any definite creed, they might even set themselves against dogmatic Christianity, but at heart he believed they were hungering for a religious ideal and revelation : and this, experience had convinced him, was especially the case with the intelligent working-class. Nor would he allow that the industrial restlessness in so far as it proceeded from the working-men themselves was a symptom of growing materialism. Rather was this restlessness at root the discontent of an awakening idealism, the bitter cry of a people becoming conscious at once of the rights and dignity of human life and of the injustices which oppressed it. And this seemed to him the sad part of it all : that in the crucial period of this awakening, the people were being led by those who were estranged from the Church and from the very idea of the Church. Why was it, he once asked, that we who hold the true message of life in our hands, have failed to win the allegiance of these peoples who are most assuredly aspiring after a great truth ? It is because, whilst we recognize the errors into which they are being led, we fail to recognize the true aspiration and ideal which is behind their discontent. Again it must be remarked that this charge has not the same force to-day as it had but a few years ago. But I note it here as showing the temper and point of view with which Father Alphonsus

looked out upon the economic and social unrest of the day. To him this unrest was at its starting-point emphatically a religious aspiration towards the realization of man's native dignity as a being created in the image of God ; and though at times he spoke some hard words concerning the conduct and action of the working-man's movement, he nevertheless always retained his reverence for the main ideal whence the movement sprang.

As he conceived it, the philosophy of the Christian State resolved itself into this : that the purpose of the State is to foster and develop the individuality of its citizens according to the pattern set forth in the Person and teaching of Jesus Christ, to the end that each individual citizen might freely and willingly stand as a member of Christian society. The difficulty, at least in practice, lies in exactly determining the distinctive rights of society and those of the individual : but he held that no right solution of social problems would be found save as the co-ordinate claims of society and the individual were kept in view. "A man, as a man, has rights as divine as those which sanction authority" : but for a long time Acts of Parliament have proceeded upon the implied principle that men's rights were founded in their position in the State, whilst the more fundamental human rights were ignored. And this he held to be the justification of the working-man's discontent.

It is, however, no part of my plan to attempt to set forth his philosophy of social life ; partly because he did not profess to elaborate any philosophic theory, and partly because his philosophic principles on this matter were shared with most of the more advanced Catholic students of the Social Question. Moreover, it was not as an economist that he approached these questions, but as a moralist. But there are two points in his discourses upon this question,

frequently reiterated, which deserve attention. The nation, he held, was losing strength and forfeiting moral authority by its absorption in material pursuits and the decay of national ideals. This seemed to him to be at the root of much of the spiritual and even economic evil of the time. For the real strength and authority of a nation lies in some spiritual aspiration: this alone can lift the individual citizens out of individual selfishness and knit the people together in spiritual kinship. Given this spiritual bond, a nation will hold together and continue to exist in spite of material difficulties and oppression; but where this spiritual bond is lacking, the nation becomes nothing else than a mass of warring interests, only united by the lust for some particular advantage which each individual citizen thinks to derive from common action: and such a negative unity is the beginning of dissolution. This was the danger which it seemed to Father Alphonsus was hanging over the English nation. Material prosperity had blinded us to our true interests: we were coming to regard the State merely as a machine for creating dividends: the State was fast losing its proper prerogative as the embodiment and defence of the spiritual ideals which had made us one people. And in this spiritual dissolution the men who stood for material prosperity were alone being considered: the weaker, less fortunate ones were left aside as of no account. With the disappearance of the national ideals, they indeed became of no account except in so far as they were useful in the creation of wealth: and in the selfish rush to acquire money, even in this regard they were mishandled to the detriment of future money-makers. But now the people themselves, long left unconsidered by those who professed to represent the nation, were asserting their manhood: and if they too seem to consider their own class interests instead of the

national welfare, that is the lesson they have learnt from those who exploited them. The road to salvation for the State lay in a return to the ideal of national responsibility and through that to the rehabilitation of spiritual nationhood. The question then which Englishmen should ask themselves most urgently is not: "What new lines of commerce are we opening?"—though this is not to be overlooked—but "What are we doing for the uplifting of the moral and spiritual life of the nation?"

And here it seemed to him, in this reconstruction of the national life—for reconstruction it mainly has to be, so far have we forgotten our national ideals—the Catholic Church has at once a unique opportunity and an urgent duty. For the Church is set in the world "not merely for individual sanctification but also for social redemption"; to her it belongs to sanctify the national life by impressing upon it the marks of the Kingdom of God. And this duty is the more imperative since nations have their own Divine sanction: "To each nation God has given its own distinct personality and mission, and in the unfolding of the life of nations, humanity makes progress". The national life, therefore, cannot be outside the proper influence of the Church, but rather is to be fostered and guided for the ultimate redemption and perfection of Christian society.

Two great principles the Catholic Church could bring to the needed reconstruction of modern England. The one was this: "The consecration of the individual to the common good, which is the death of selfishness"; the other: "The blessedness of poverty".

The first principle is one which most Christian men will admit in theory, and which many endeavour to practise in their individual lives; yet not always with a sufficient appreciation of its Catholic significance. This consecration

of the individual in Catholic teaching implies an inalienable right to individuality, and consequently insures to each man the right to that sovereign possession of himself which is the ultimate spiritual freedom. The free man, not the slave, is the natural type of the true Christian : and so far our ancient national aspiration finds its perfect countertype in Catholic Christianity. But individual liberty is apt to stray into individual selfishness ; into arrogance when united with strength, into militant covetousness when united with weakness : and these are the phenomena which figure largely in our present social conditions. It will be otherwise if Catholicism can revive the national love of individual freedom by a consecration of the ideal of personal liberty as a willing service of one's neighbours. Then the personal possession of power or wealth or other advantages, would mean a personal exercise of beneficence ; whilst the lack of these advantages would not tend to demoralize and degrade : since all would feel themselves in actual fact the inheritors of the nations' common possession, both spiritual and material.

When anyone ventured to doubt the practicableness of such teaching as a principle of national life, Father Alphonsus would be very wrathful : such a doubt he deemed a sort of blasphemy against the Gospel : it implied, he said, a disbelief in the power of the Church to redeem the world's life. Doubtless there were forces in the world which could contend mightily for the reign of selfishness ; but he trusted in the Divine power of the Gospel to bring about a renewal of the national consciousness in accordance with Catholic Truth and Life : and he held it to be the duty of Catholics to work for such a realization.

The other Catholic principle which he held it to be our duty to bring home to the nation was, as I have said, the

blessedness of poverty. This truth, he held, Catholics themselves in their solicitude to relieve the wants of the poor not infrequently overlooked, and in doing so strayed from the proper lines of Catholic renovation. To him, the evangelical beatitude, "Blessed are the poor," had at once a personal significance and a social. The rejection of this principle was written clearly in our national development during the last four centuries; and the ignoring of it in the nation's attempts at social reform had tended to pauperize the poor, and to place our social structure upon an anti-Christian basis. With an intimate approval he accepted the assertion put forward at a gathering of Franciscan tertiaries interested in social work: "We do not want to take away poverty, but to make poverty 'holy poverty'". The meaning of this statement was that whilst we must recognize the right of every man to acquire wealth and comfort, the sacredness of poverty itself is to be upheld as a principle in social life. And indeed one cannot move very intimately amongst the poor in our city slums without becoming aware of a type of character, exquisite in its spiritual beauty, which, like some mountain blossom, thrives only where the ground is stony and the inclines steep, and which would sicken in a richer soil. To come across one such of the divinely poor is a revelation of the joy of life: and the type is not rare. The type, however, is native only to poverty; transplant it into easy comfort, and its peculiar beauty vanishes; it needs the hardiness of want, the detachment of accepted penury, to bring it to its delicate perfection. In its presence one becomes aware, perhaps for the first time, of the reality which justified St. Francis's worship of "The Lady Poverty".

It was perhaps this experience of a Poverty Beautiful, acquired in his work amongst the very poor, which made

Father Alphonsus declare in one of his sermons: "Our work is not to relieve poverty but to elevate the souls of the poor". The words sound paradoxical: but they were the utterance of a definite Catholic principle. No man was more ready to relieve the poor than he: of what he had he gave freely, and when he had not, he did not hesitate to beg for them. Again, no preacher set forth more earnestly than he, the right of the working-man to an adequate wage and to the opportunity to better his economic condition. Yet there was in this no contradiction of the principle that the poor are blessed. Christian social justice implies the right of an adequate wage and of the relief of the poor; but it also implies the right of the poor to be poor without moral or spiritual degradation. Poverty is one of the liberties of the children of God: but the world has done its best to destroy that liberty by loading it with conditions which depress the spirit and make for moral and spiritual squalor. The first of these conditions has been the isolation of the poor in their struggle for the necessities of existence. They have been herded into their own dens and narrow quarters, and fenced round with the silent indifference of an outer world. That lack of a wider human fellowship has done more to depress the souls of the poor than any merely economic factor. It has tended to cut them off from interests not connected with their own struggle to live; and mentally and morally as well as physically, has confined them within stifling walls; whereas the natural heritage of the poor, as of all human beings, are the broad highways of human life with their immediate opportunities for the exercise of the soul's faculties. But individual and class selfishness have deprived poverty of this freedom and cramped its spiritual life, too frequently almost to extinction. The poor therefore need freedom; not so much

political freedom which after all is but a means to an end, and not always a certain means, but the freedom to live properly human lives. Chiefly they need the freedom of human fellowship. To this end, Father Alphonsus was insistent that Christian charity must bring about a greater intercourse between all classes of the community ; that the educated and more wealthy class should break down this isolation of the poor, not on the basis of giving doles, but on that of human fellowship. To the same end, he looked forward to the time when in the relationship between employers and employed there should appear less of the mere commercial transaction and more of the regard for human life.

A second condition which had deprived the poor of their spiritual liberty was the system of doles, whereby the nation for long centuries had thought to discharge its whole duty to the poor : a system in which contempt for poverty was but too apparent in the very relief of the poor. For the Poor Law system, Father Alphonsus had wrathful denunciation : it was born in arrogance, and had long weltered in the curses of the poor. But it was not merely for the legal relief of the poor that he reserved his condemnation. Even more to be condemned was the individual giving of doles without thought of the human dignity of the receivers. To thrust the poor into a state of idle dependency was no true charity. The first condition of a morally human life is the sense of personal responsibility for one's own life : in any giving of alms, that truth has to be kept in view. The poor should be assisted not to idleness or the shirking of their own responsibilities, but to their maintenance or reinstatement in right living. At the least, an alms should be an acknowledgment of Christian fellowship. Given in this spirit alms are holy : apart from it, they

are an insult to poverty. I remember an occasion when he was speaking before an audience which did not altogether share his view on this matter ; and in the course of the debate, he spoke rather strongly upon the evils which are apt to follow upon indiscriminate almsgiving. An hour or so afterwards I was standing with him on a railway platform, waiting for the train which was to take him home, when our attention was arrested by a family of foreign immigrants. A small boy was of the party, looking bewildered in his strange surroundings. Without a word, Father Alphonsus moved quickly to the child's side, and a few moments later I saw the child's hand close obviously upon a coin. When Father Alphonsus came back to me, I murmured in jest some word about the evils of indiscriminate almsgiving. He laughed merrily for a moment ; then with sudden seriousness said : " Poor little fellow, he must feel lonely in this big station ". And the smile with which the child's eyes followed him, showed that the giving had not been indiscriminate ; as no gift is which proceeds from discerning sympathy.

A third condition which had robbed poverty of its joy and dignity, he said, was its divorce from religious ideals. He doubted whether without religion poverty ever could be beautiful and joyous. Religious Faith gave the poor possession of an immaterial world of sunlight and colour, the reflection of which made even the earth beautiful to them. To the fact of their Faith, he attributed the greater joyousness and spirituality of the Irish poor as compared with the English ; and in proof of this would cite the known fact that when the Irish lose hold of their Faith they fall into a lower human condition than even their English fellow-poor. There were times when he looked out longingly over the broad acres of the countryside and dreamed of leading

a body of evangelists to bring back to the English country-poor the Faith which had been taken from them. The sadness of the English farm labourer, for instance, chilled his spirit ; and he regarded him as a standing rebuke to the English Church for its long neglect of the poor. With an intimate satisfaction he heard of the projected idea of the Catholic motor mission, which he trusted would bring Catholicism back into the life of the country labourer. In like manner he dreamed of evangelizing " missions " in the city slums ; and spoke with reverence of the Salvation Army for setting an example which he believed we Catholics would do well to follow. But of this I shall have occasion to speak farther on. Here I am concerned only to set forth his ideas as to how the poverty of the poor might be set free from those fetters which have degraded it in our national life ; and how being set free, poverty itself is an asset in the spiritual life of the nation : an asset not to be cast aside in our attempts at social reform. In fact, he was convinced that under right conditions, the poor are the spiritual back-bone of the community, without which no nation will long continue to hold together or to maintain an honourable place in the larger life of the world. For the soul of a nation is its spiritual aspiration ; and this aspiration, he held, is best secured when it is rooted in the hearts of the poor.

One is therefore not surprised to find Father Alphonsus actively interested in the question of national education, especially as it concerns the elementary schools. He was interested in it both on directly religious grounds and on social ; and that not in the spirit of partisanship but because he believed the denominational school to be necessary for the spiritual welfare of the people at large. The increasing secularization of the schools, he held, was producing a temper of mind to which Christianity would become

more and more unintelligible both as regards its ideals and its moral code. This result would come not merely from the exclusion of definite Christian teaching but from the purely secularist spirit in which knowledge was being imparted. He was keenly alive to the fact that the elementary school subsidized by the State was an immediate objective on the part of those who were contending against dogmatic Christianity. If they could gain the schools they would possess a vantage ground of indefinable influence for the moulding of the life of the nation ; and it seemed to him that they were in a very fair way to gain the schools, unless the believers in dogmatic Christianity bestirred themselves. It was chiefly, too, upon the Catholic body that the brunt of the defence must fall, because Catholics alone were consistent in their dogmatic position. On all sides the Anglican Church was manifesting its weakness in its compromises with the State ; whilst the Nonconformists were actually playing into the hands of the secularists. And yet he was aware that the question was not altogether a simple one. If denominational schools were to hold their own, they must be at least as efficient in secular instruction, such as the State has a right to demand for its citizens, as are the undenominational schools. And for this reason he would admit of no compromise which would tend to put Catholic schools at a disadvantage in this matter. Such a compromise would soon defeat itself ; an inferior education would handicap the Catholic boy in his later struggle for life, and lay the Catholic school open to the charge of civic inefficiency.

But his frequent insistence that Catholics should use every endeavour to make their school thoroughly efficient, lay upon a still deeper principle than this. A Catholic, just because he is a Catholic, has a certain claim to the best

instruction that we can give him. For " to cultivate the Christian spirit, is to cultivate the highest expression of the human spirit ". And though instruction in religious principles is the chief means to this end, yet " the Church cannot disregard the subsidiary helps which come to the mind through the media of what is termed secular knowledge ". In truth the claim of the Church to interfere with education at all, is justified by her belief that all truth is religious and that every acquisition of truth is in itself an advance in the spiritual life of man, and so brings him nearer to God.

I have already referred to this habit of mind which made Father Alphonsus regard all life as religious worship, and all truth as religious truth : and here again we find it in his refusal to acknowledge any hard and fast line between secular and religious knowledge. Upon this ground he held that the Church has a rightful supervision even over secular instruction, lest it be perverted from its true purpose—the building up of Christian life and character. Upon this same principle, he held that Catholic education carried out in accordance with the genius of the Church, could never rightly be called sectarian. He confessed that at times we fell short of our own ideal, and in doing so gave to the Catholic Church the appearance of a sect. That was a danger we must needs avoid. " Catholicism," he again and again urged, " is the summing up of all the truth of life ; its roots are deep down in human nature ; its conscious sympathy is with all the deep striving of the human spirit ". Consequently Catholic education must be abreast of the time ; it must expound and direct with understanding knowledge those moral and spiritual difficulties which beset the heart of man in every generation ; it must also fit its subjects to take their part in the life of the nation for the proper fulfilment of the nation's mission in the world. It

was a broad principle : but he would admit of nothing less as the basis of Catholic education : and upon that principle he set his claim for the recognition of the Catholic school by the State.

So it was that Father Alphonsus looked for an eventual harmony between the Catholic Church and the State in the reconstruction of the national life. And for this reason he took every opportunity of urging upon Catholics the duty of studying the actual problems of social life. On one occasion, speaking at a congress of Franciscan tertiaries, he declared : " Surely it is but wisdom to acquaint oneself with what most nearly concerns man and arouses his enthusiasm. If there is good in it, why not consecrate it by your sanction, approval and defence ? The instinct of life turns in the direction of social reforms, and it is folly to say they do not concern us. They are religious because they are a plea for greater justice amongst men." I have no doubt he would have welcomed the recently founded *Catholic Social Study Guild ;* as he welcomed the establishment of Catholic Settlements in the poorest districts of London, and other practical efforts being made to bring Catholicism into touch with the social difficulties of the time. All these endeavours appeared to him as the dawn of the desired day when the Catholic Church would again guide and mould the life of the whole nation.

VII

About fifteen months before his death, I became acquainted with Father Alphonsus in a new light. He was giving a "mission" in one of the poorest parishes in the East End of London: and in all my recollection of him since, I see him as I saw him then, the knight-errant of Christ the Redeemer, turning aside from his wider duties as Minister Provincial of the English Province of his Order, to devote himself for the time wholly and with a single heart, to the spiritual uplifting of an East End London parish. The poor people were mostly casual labourers. When work was brisk at the docks, some of them earned sufficient for the day, and a little more; but there were few of them who did not know the intervals of forced idleness when bread was scarce in their too squalid dwellings, and when to obtain bread at all, the women must work long hours for a few pence, at making match-boxes or peeling onions for the dealers in pickles. To such people all social questions resolve themselves into this: how to obtain the next meal; and religion is generally a matter of hope amidst despair, a despair often too deep for felt pain, and evident only in the numbness of the mental and spiritual faculties. The problems of their life are therefore very strictly personal and family problems. Beyond the limits of their own domestic circle and neighbourhood, the world is a human blurr, or a land of alien mystery.

Now the success of a "mission" preacher depends in no

small measure upon his ability to bring his mental vision and sympathy into strict relationship with the life of the people to whom he comes, and to concentrate his own spiritual energy upon the actual personal problem of their religious need. For the time they must be eminently his world ; his knowledge of the outer world is only of use to him in so far as it enables him to understand and probe this more limited world, and to arrive at the solution of the immediate spiritual need of those to whom he is preaching. It is a concentration of vision and sympathy which not all men are capable of, especially those accustomed to look upon the world with a wider outlook.

Some of those who knew Father Alphonsus, used to doubt whether he would make a successful mission preacher, for this very reason, that he was accustomed to deal with the wider and more transcendental problems of life : and in fact for many years I think he doubted his own ability to do this special form of missionary work. At least it was only during the last two years of his life that he entered into it with confidence. One or two " missions " in which he had taken part previously, though apparently attended with good results, had left him unsatisfied with himself : he felt he had not found himself in the work.

But in the Lent of 1909 a call came to him from a densely populated parish in the north of England, and with the call came the inspiration. Selecting his own companions—he was then Minister Provincial—he embarked upon a month's mission work with an enthusiasm which swept away self-diffidence : and the result was a religious revival which is still vividly remembered in that northern city. The story of that mission, as I have heard it related by his fellow-missioners, takes one's thoughts back to the grand days of Franciscan home-missions in Italy in the fifteenth century,

both as regards its method and its results. "One evening," says one of the missioners, "it was my turn to give the preliminary instruction. I was in the midst of it when there was a commotion at the church door, and to my astonishment, Father Alphonsus entered at the head of a procession of men and women whom he had collected from the back streets and had marched to the church. After my instruction, Father Alphonsus went into the pulpit and preached as I had never heard anyone preach, and kept the congregation spellbound."

Another evening about the end of the first week, after the evening service was over, and whilst the clergy were at a late supper, Father Alphonsus amazed both the parochial clergy and his fellow-missioners by calling for a volunteer to accompany him into a quarter of the parish which was of ill-fame. Most of the clergy present remonstrated, but Father Alphonsus pleaded: to visit this quarter during the day was useless: doors were then barred against the coming of the priest: the only hope to gain entrance was to come upon them unexpectedly after dark. The parish priest from the first had spoken no protest, and finally openly approved. As he afterwards said: "I knew my man." One of the assistant missioners at length volunteered, and Father Alphonsus with his companion went forth. The immediate results of that nocturnal visit were such that the next night most of the clergy turned out. Father Alphonsus's courage was justified: before the end of the mission, forty-seven marriages were brought about; and a large number of the dwellers in the district migrated to more respectable quarters after making their peace with God. On the final evening of the mission, such were the crowds who flocked to the Church, that it was found necessary to have an open-air service. An altar was erected at a place where several

streets meet ; and a vast crowd estimated by some at twenty thousand people, and marshalled in serried ranks by the parochial clergy and the missioners, took part in the renewal of baptismal promises with which the mission closed. "Never in my long experience as a parish priest," wrote the venerable pastor of the Church in answer to a letter of inquiry, "have I witnessed such a mission : in my opinion Father Alphonsus's heroic labours during those weeks did much to bring about his untimely death. He did not spare himself, but what struck me most was his intense earnestness. He was a marvellous preacher."

The report of that mission had reached my ears ; yet I must confess that when in response to my application for a friar to preach a mission in the East End of London, he offered himself, I had an unquiet feeling that his preaching to those poor folk would be in some sort an experiment. I was prepared to criticize ; but by the second night of the mission any tendency to criticism had given place to sheer wonderment. His very appearance when he faced his audience and stood for a few moments silently gathering himself, as it seemed, for his task, sent a thrill through the crowd of meanly-clad folk before him, and a look of intent expectation sprang into the very attitude of the audience and a tense silence fell upon them. Then in low tones, so that one must strain one's hearing to catch the words, he began to speak, as a man holding his soul in leash. Gradually the words broke their bond, and soon his sentences rose and swelled and a mighty eloquence poured forth, rhythmic and unhalting, sometimes lyrical, at other times dramatic ; but it was the eloquence not of words, but of the man's soul. He seemed at times to take up his words carelessly, seldom with any nice precision ; but that mattered not. Poetry was in the very quality of the thought ; a refined spirituality

in the emotion ; his sermon was as the utterance of the spirit itself alive with an urgent humanity yet abashed before the mystery of the divine. And all that crowd from the city's byways, hung upon every word as men seeing a vision which had gripped their souls. One felt that they saw, rather than heard ; and that the vision they saw was one which struck at the root of their understanding, and the core of their heart. They had been drawn into the preacher's own spirit, and they were gazing with him upon the truth he was telling them. Going home, as I saw them go, reverence was in their eyes, and the abashment of spiritual experience. Truly was poverty made comely at that moment. Nor did I wonder as the days went on, to see men who had not been to church for many years until they had been drawn by the spell of this preacher, coming humbly to confession at night, and early the next morning approaching the altar to receive holy communion. As many such thus renewed their spiritual life as would more than half fill that poor London church. A year afterwards these poor folk sent a petition that Father Alphonsus should come and give them another " mission ". He promised to return the following year ; but early in that year he died.

I have asked myself : How was it that he whose interests in the world's life took so wide a range and soared upon the larger world-questions of the day, could thus bring himself within the immediate personal experiences of the very poorest, and manifest himself, as he did, as the interpreter of their soul's latent aspiration ? And as often as I have considered the question, I see in him a fundamental simplicity of spirit and a quick, all-embracing human sympathy and beyond that, a human soul intimately one with that Catholic Faith which is the effulgence of the Incarnate God, the Redeemer of man's life on earth.

I saw him but seldom after that London "mission". The last occasion we met was in the hop-country of Kent during the time of the hop-picking. He had rushed down for a week-end to say mass for the Catholic hop-pickers at one of the centres of the Catholic Hop-pickers' Mission. He seemed then to be tired and restless, but none of us suspected that he was already in the grip of a mortal disease. A few weeks later he was one of the speakers at an undenominational temperance meeting in South Wales, when he spoke with all his accustomed energy and fervour. It was his last public appearance. That was at the end of the autumn-Long before the winter had passed he was dead.—*Consummatus in brevi explevit tempora multa.*

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